GROWING GARDENS BUILDING POWER

FOOD JUSTICE AND URBAN AGRICULTURE IN BROOKLYN

JUSTIN SEAN MYERS

Growing Gardens, Building Power

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Growing Gardens, Building Power

Food Justice and Urban Agriculture in Brooklyn

JUSTIN SEAN MYERS

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This book is dedicated to the gardeners of East New York
and to those who work with them in solidarity
and self-determination.

It is important that the people we speak with have a certain understanding . . . [of] redlining . . . The context is very important because it shows people, whether it be East New York, Bed-Stuy [Bedford-Stuyvesant], Bushwick—whether it be Compton, South Central, Baltimore, West Side, East Side, wherever, anyplace, there's reasons that places are like that.

—**DARYL MARSHALL,** East New York Farms! Community Organizer

What we are doing here in East New York and the reason we are doing this is for the sake of kids, the sake of women with children, the sake of senior citizens . . . and this is what needs to be done.

—**BEVERLY,** community gardener in East New York

Change fundamentally has to happen in communities.

—**SARITA DAFTARY-STEEL,** East New York Farms! Project Director

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Growing Gardens, Building Power

1

Introduction

From Food to Food Justice

It is 8:00 in the morning on a sweltering Saturday in August. I walk out of my prewar apartment building, and the wail of car horns reaches my ears a split second before the wall of humidity hits my body. As I look out across Eastern Parkway, beads of sweat begin to pool on the back of my neck and forehead. The massive boulevard, designed by the famous tandem of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, consists of a four-lane road and twin one-way frontage streets separated from each other by two broad medians lined with majestic ash, elm, and maple trees and finished off with grass, stone pathways, and benches. As is usual on the weekend, the boulevard is packed with automobiles and teeming with pedestrians and bikers. So are the cross streets of Vanderbilt, Washington, and Franklin, which are bustling with people visiting coffee shops, cafes, and restaurants. Amid all of this are some of Central Brooklyn's most venerable cultural amenities and green spaces, including the Brooklyn Museum, a Beaux Arts building that is the third-largest museum in New York City; the 52-acre Brooklyn Botanic Garden, well known for its cherry blossom festival; the Central Library, inspired by the Art Moderne movement and arguably the crown jewel of the Brooklyn Public Library system; and the 585-acre Prospect Park, also designed by Olmsted and Vaux and referred to as Brooklyn's "flagship park" by boosters.

On Saturday mornings, the area becomes home to another well-known attraction, the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket. Located in front of the entrance to Prospect Park and at the nexus of Park Slope and Prospect Heights,

the space is quintessentially gentrified Brooklyn. Marathon runners dart in and out of distracted shoppers, and dog owners peruse the offerings on their way to the park for off-leash hours. Hipsters, foodies, and yuppies line up to buy grass-fed and heritage-breed meats, certified naturally grown vegetables, and organic whole-grain baked goods. Twenty-somethings discuss their top picks among free weekend activities, with several expressing their giddy anticipation of the upcoming Sufjan Stevens and Bon Iver concerts at the Prospect Park Bandshell. People in their thirties and forties push their children around in Bugaboo strollers, purchase raw-milk cheeses, and sample tastings from numerous Hudson Valley distilleries and wineries. They engage in conversation with other parents about their children's educational experiences as well as the hurdles necessary to get them into a good kindergarten or elementary school. Other shoppers strike up random conversations with each other while waiting in line to purchase regional grains, sustainably raised ostrich meat, and seafood harvested locally from Long Island Sound.

The Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket is not your run-of-the-mill farmers market. It is the flagship Brooklyn farmers market, the second largest of its kind in New York City, and reflective of the Big Apple as a national leader in going local.[1] However, the market provides only a partial image of the food movement in the city, and despite its allure as a foodie nirvana, I do not go toward its beckoning sights, sounds, and smells. Instead, I walk underground to the Eastern Parkway–Brooklyn Museum subway stop and take the 3 train east to the end of the line, in East New York—a working-class Black, Latinx, and Caribbean community once referred to as the "end of civilization."[2] My destination is 613 New Lots Avenue, home to United Community Centers (UCC), which has nearly sixty years of social justice activism, and East New York Farms! (ENYF!), a food justice organization that is building a local food system to address racial, ethnic, and class inequities in East New York.

As I pass through Crown Heights and Brownsville on my way to ENYF!, the landscape consists of underfunded public housing complexes, trash-strewn vacant lots, and poorly maintained apartment buildings and row houses. This view begins to change twenty-five minutes into my ride, as the train approaches Van Siclen Avenue, the second-to-last stop, and community gardens and urban farms appear alongside the row houses and raised subway tracks. To the north of the tracks are Triple R Garden and New Visions Garden, which together occupy almost half an acre between two side streets. At Triple R Garden, several gardeners are harvesting onions, carrots, callaloo, and hot chili peppers, plants that will be mixed with a few other vegetables and a bunch of spices to create delicious soups and hot sauces for sale at ENYF! farmers markets (figure 1). The surplus produce will be given to neighbors, coworkers, and extended family members—nothing goes to waste. A blue-and-white mural in the northwestern corner of the garden tells the story behind the garden's name (figure 2).

FIG. 1 Kale, callaloo, sweet potato, and eggplant grow at Triple R Garden. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

FIG. 2 Behind callaloo and sunflowers is the "Rest, Relaxation, and Reflection" mural at Triple R Garden. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

Divided into four scenes, the images portray Black youth reading a book (resting), staring at the night sky (relaxing), and thinking about their community (reflecting), while the final scene depicts a yellow scroll that reads, "To plant a garden is to believe in the future." Through these four scenes, the mural proudly declares the garden to be a space for leisure and contemplation as well as a claim to a brighter tomorrow. Gardens in East New York are not just about growing food: they are about growing dreams.

FIG. 3 Adjacent to and above the Fresh Farm, at Hendrix Street and Livonia Avenue, are the raised subway tracks for the 3 train and row houses built in the early 1900s. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

Next door, the raised boxes of collards, bush peas, and brussels sprouts at New Visions Garden are surrounded by the bright yellow, red, and blue hues of an elevated stage, numerous picnic tables, and several shade structures. Right now, the garden is quiet, but later this evening it will echo with festivity as people come from near and far to celebrate a birthday party. Soul music from the 1970s will blast through the sound system; adults will dance on stage; families will eat, drink, and laugh at the tables; youths will scream and chase each other with bubble wands; and grandparents will take turns watching babies and toddlers. In East New York, gardens are not just for growing food: they are for growing community.

To the south of the tracks is the Fresh Farm, where residents grow produce exclusively for sale at ENYF!'s farmers markets (figure 3). Malabar spinach and cucumber vines climb up trellises towards the sky, dasheen plants sway in the breeze, and giant green pumpkins fan out across the ground like a beautiful kelp forest. Adjacent to the Fresh Farm is a vacant lot and then the half-acre UCC Youth Farm, which quickly emerges from view beneath a magnificent willow tree (figure 4). Although covering only half an acre, the UCC Youth Farm grows a wide range of crops. There are rows and rows of tomatoes, hot peppers, carrots, beets, lettuce, bitter melon, okra, eggplants, and cucumbers. ENYF! youth interns are present, turning the compost, tending to the beehives, and providing a tour of the farm to members of a local volunteer group. Immediately south of the farm, and overlooking its expanse, is a mural painted on an apartment building wall. In bright orange it proudly declares "East New York

FIG. 4 The north end of the UCC Youth Farm is by Livonia Avenue and north of New Lots Avenue. In the near foreground, tomatoes grow. A greenhouse can be seen at the far end of the garden. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

FIG. 5 The mural of ENYF! is on an apartment building adjacent to the UCC Youth Farm. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

Farms!" (figure 5). The text hovers in the background over a dark brown silhouette of the New York City skyline. In the foreground, a giant red tomato and a huge yellow bell pepper are joined by orange carrots; purple eggplants; and red, purple, blue, and orange butterflies, all of which are dancing in the air. The mural is a testament to the vibrancy and determination of East New Yorkers to farm in the city and is a vision, demand, description, and declaration all in one.

FIG. 6 A regional farmer selling produce at the Saturday farmers market. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

As the train moves on, the street in front of the UCC Youth Farm comes into view. Due to the local farmers market, it is closed to automobiles and occupied by over a dozen tents (figure 6). Customers line up twenty deep at the fish stand to purchase seasonal fish and shellfish from Long Island Sound. Small rural farmers have bushels of sweet corn and buckets of watermelon for sale. Neighborhood gardeners are selling their produce and sauces. Caribbean families are selling hot meals, including the staples of curried chicken or goat with sides of mac and cheese, rice and peas, and stewed greens. Other vendors are selling veggie and beef patties, as well as sweet bread and plantain chips. ARTs East New York, a local nonprofit, is setting up a stage in the middle of the street for one of its Summer Saturdaze events that uses performance art to facilitate conversations about the social and economic issues facing the community. At the community table, the screams of children fill the air as they paint, color, and play with sparkles. Youthful shouts also emanate from the playground opposite the market, with its swings, slides, and jungle gyms. People are sitting on picnic benches, eating food, and singing along to the Black and Caribbean music flowing through the market's speakers. Residents wander around the market, run into friends and neighbors, and engage in conversations about food-related topics (such as how to grow particular crops and how to prepare certain plants for dinner) as well as more politically infused subjects, including voter ID laws and stop-and-frisk policing. One of ENYF!'s community organizers has set up a booth and is registering people to vote. The market may not be as packed or offer the same items as the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket, but it is full of food, life, and community by and for East New Yorkers, and that is what matters.

East New York: Changing the Face, Place, and Politics of the Food Movement

Over the past several decades, the buzzwords in much of the food movement have been "buy local" and "go organic." We are told that we can change the food system through voting with our forks and that everyone must pay more for food to support small diversified farmers and environmentally sustainable agricultural practices. The movement has generally been depicted as affluent and white, a movement of people who carry cloth bags, drive Toyota Priuses, sip $5 lattes, and salivate over kale salad.[3] In the landscape of this movement, noodle shops and whiskey bars exist alongside cafes and artisanal bakeries; farm-to-table restaurants and food cooperatives flourish among rooftop farms; and throngs of customers line up in front of food trucks to sample the latest trends in street food before returning home to their gentrified prewar apartment buildings, restored craftsman bungalows, or newly built luxury condominiums. In short, it is the landscape of the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket.

If you get off the 3 train in East New York and look around, it will be readily apparent that East New Yorkers do not fit this traditional narrative, they are predominantly Black, Latinx, Caribbean and working-class. These urban gardeners and farmers are growing for themselves, their families, their neighbors, their coworkers, and the broader community. They grow food for consumption, gifting, barter, and cash income. They grow food because it is part of their cultural roots, ethnoracial identities, and family histories. Some grow because they wanted to take up a hobby, desired fresh air, or wanted to turn blight into beauty. Others grow because they could not find fresh produce in the local grocery store, could not afford the fresh produce they did find in the local grocery store, or wanted to combat the food-based health inequities afflicting their community through the use of whole food and herbal medicine. A handful of people see agriculture as a rewarding and meaningful form of self-employment. There are many reasons residents go local and grow food for themselves and others.

The landscape of East New York does not match the traditional narrative of where the food movement is happening either. Within several blocks of the UCC Youth Farm, you will encounter auto body shops, barbershops, nail salons, Chinese take-out restaurants, a discount grocery store, vacant lots, and boarded-up and abandoned buildings. Store decors are minimal, thick layers of dust line the products in their windows, and signs are weathered and dirty. No sidewalk seating is provided at restaurants in the community, an indication that the street is still not a safe place for leisure. As small businesses come and go, the only constant fixture is the beat cops on foot patrol who enforce so-called quality-of-life ordinances that are ignored in more affluent communities: no riding of bicycles on the sidewalk, no loitering on street corners, no

MAP 1. Map of area surrounding East New York. The geographic boundaries of East New York are outlined in black. (Map created by Trevor Myers.)

jaywalking, and no drinking on stoops. And if you venture a half mile north of ENYF!, you will find the Belmont-Sutter apartments, a series of three-story public housing apartments run by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and Sutter Gardens, a series of three-story buildings for low income households funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The antithesis of housing in gentrified Park Slope and Prospect Heights, these plain square buildings in muted brown brick lack any front porches, patios, balconies, private backyard spaces, or trees. What is supposed to pass for a lawn is fenced in on all sides with no entrance—a signal that the haphazardly grown grass is for looks, not play. The parking lot is also fenced in and locked, and therefore bare of automobiles. The bleakness of the built environment is a reflection of City Hall's lack of hope for, and subsequent lack of investment in, East New Yorkers.

As its name implies, East New York is situated in the easternmost section of North-Central Brooklyn. It is bounded to the north and south by green space, Highland Park and Jamaica Bay, respectively; to the west by the communities of Brownsville and Canarsie; and to the east by the neighborhoods of Woodhaven, Ozone Park, and Howard Beach, all of which are in Queens County (map 1). Encompassing 3,586 acres (5.6 square miles), East New York is made up of several neighborhoods, including Cypress Hills (northeast), City

Line (east), Spring Creek (southeast), New Lots (central), and Starrett City (southwest). Although the geographic center of East New York is a mere four and a half miles from the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket, the community's demographics and the day-to-day existence of its residents are quite different from those of the white middle- and upper-class neighborhoods of Prospect Heights and Park Slope. Home to over 200,000 people as of 2019, East New York is 52 percent Black, 37 percent Latinx, 7 percent Asian, and 3 percent white.[4] It also has a significant immigrant population: 36 percent of its residents were born outside of the United States, principally in a Caribbean country.[5] The median household income in the community is below $40,000, 30 percent of its residents live in poverty, and 52 percent are rent burdened (defined as paying over 30 percent of their income in rent).[6]

Many of the people who live in East New York struggle to find stable employment and affordable housing in one of the most expensive cities in the country. Consequently, residents often juggle multiple jobs, combine formal and informal work, use public assistance, and live in overcrowded housing to get by. East New Yorkers also struggle to obtain a high-quality education, as youths attend schools with large classes and without up-to-date science labs and textbooks for every student. Twenty-three percent of the residents 25 and older have not finished high school, and only 21 percent have a college degree—numbers that do not fully capture the fact that many K–12 students are below average in their writing, reading, and math skills.[7] Food insecurity, food-based health inequities, and mass incarceration are also prominent problems, 24 percent of the residents are food insecure and 34 percent have hypertension, and the community's incarceration rate is more than twice that of the city average.[8]

What I have described is indeed East New York, but it presents a limited view of the community that arises from a deficit-based approach—one that is unfortunately dominant when nonresidents write about and conceptualize East New York, and therefore East New Yorkers. While it is true both that East New Yorkers experience these inequities and that such inequities are due to a history of strong-armed city planning, institutional racism, and systemic disinvestment since World War II, such a deficit-based approach ignores the fact that residents have never just given up and let City Hall, private developers, and white America destroy them, their families, and their neighborhoods.[9] Reading the social history of East New York from a strengths-based approach and a perspective that highlights self-organization and community mobilization creates a different narrative, one in which residents have come together and organized to fight for the creation of affordable housing, living-wage jobs, new hospitals, a fully funded and racially integrated public education system, and an end to stop-and-frisk policing and the mass incarceration of East New York's youth.[10]

Nor has the activism of East New Yorkers been limited to these issues. Decades of systemic disinvestment in the community produced waves of retail closures, the flight of grocery stores to the suburbs, and the proliferation of fast-food restaurants and discount food stores. This resulted in East New York becoming awash in cheap ultra-processed foods.[11] And when residents did go shopping at the few grocery stores that remained in the community, they had to deal with short-weighting, overpriced goods, green meat, rusty cans, spoiled milk, fuzzy produce, and lots of rats.[12] Such a foodscape was unacceptable to many residents, and they leveraged decades of community mobilization to challenge these food-based inequities in several ways.[13] They took their grievances about the conditions of local grocery stores to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, whose staff members said that they could not do anything about the problems because they were struggling with budget cuts and did not have the resources to enforce health code violations. Residents then shifted to direct action to change the conditions of their grocery stores. Central to this effort was Eastern Brooklyn Congregations, a network of civic and religious organizations in East New York, Brownsville, Ocean Hill, and Bushwick. The network trained a hundred community members to be citizen food inspectors, and the community inspectors went into ten stores one Saturday morning in 1981. During their inspections, customers showed them the rat holes, spoiled food, broken refrigerators, and unlabeled cans that they had to deal with on a daily basis. The inspectors took these findings to the owners of the grocery stores and obtained, on the spot, seven signed agreements to fix what was wrong. The three owners who refused to address customer concerns were invited to a community meeting and told that if they did not fix the problems, the community would use whatever means necessary to do so. The three owners promptly signed the agreements. Beyond working to improve the conditions of existing grocery stores, residents left the community to spent $44.1 million annually on groceries in Western Brooklyn, Queens, and other parts of Long Island, areas whose grocery stores had lower prices and better produce.[14]

Another tactic employed by residents, one that resisted the racial neoliberalism and displacement politics of City Hall, is guerrilla gardening.[15] As community members watched Wall Street and City Hall give up on their community, withdraw needed public services, and bulldoze entire neighborhoods into rubble under the discourse of planned shrinkage, they organized and converted the vacant lots into community gardens.[16] These gardens became hubs of food production and important places for residents to access fresh produce. The guerrilla gardening became so extensive that East New York has the most community gardens of any community in New York City: over sixty-five gardens spread across more than ninety lots.[17] And it is precisely because of the liveliness of the community gardening movement in East New

York that the East New York Planning Group, which existed from 1995 to 1998, began to focus on how to scale up and strengthen the existing efforts of gardeners.[18] Embracing an asset-based development model to address social problems in the community, the group combined geographic information systems, meetings with community organizations, and neighborhood forums and envisioning sessions.[19] The first component sought to map land usage in the community, while the others asked: "What works in East NY? What doesn't work?" and "What do you want to see in 10–15 years?"[20]

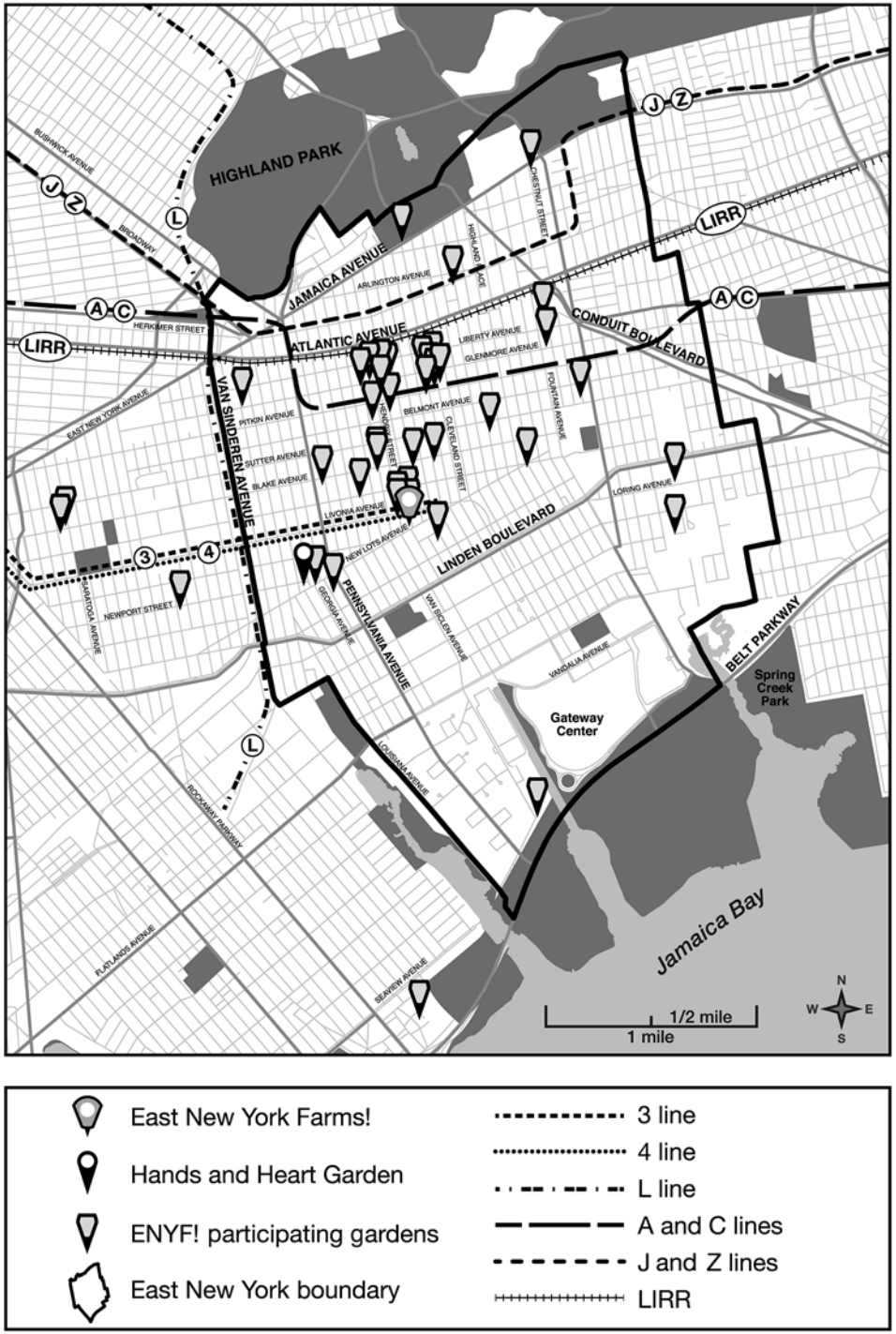
The planning group found many assets in the community, including numerous community gardens, countless community gardeners growing food, lots of vacant land (over 15 percent of the land in the community), and a large youth population (over 32 percent of the population was under eighteen).[21] While the community had a lot of assets to tap into, it also had several acute needs. First, the youths in the community lacked job opportunities, given the community's marginal relationship to the formal wage economy, its underfunded educational institutions, and the general stigma against youths of color as troublemakers and unemployable. Second, fresh and affordable produce was very difficult to obtain given the foodscape of bodegas, discount stores, and low-quality grocery stores. Third, there was a need to institutionalize the right of community gardeners to long-term land tenure, because City Hall was threatening to end the short-term leases of community gardens on city-owned land and bring the land back into the market by selling it to private developers.[22] Residents were opposed to this proposal, since they did not see the community gardens as worthless plots of land but as places for socializing, producing food, and fostering cultural identity. Additionally, these gardens were treated as de facto open space within East New York, where there were few parks and playgrounds. City Hall recommends 2.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents and East New York has a mere 0.614 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, less than 25 percent of this recommendation.[23] The fight for gardens in East New York was therefore a fight for desperately needed public space in the community, and a fight for East New Yorkers' right to the city.[24]

What emerged out of this planning project, which had vital funding from the Hitachi Foundation ($250,000 over a two-year period), was a clearer conception of the community's assets and needs as well as the food justice organization ENYF!. The organization was given the task of scaling up community food production by strengthening existing assets in order to address a range of inequities that were confronting East New Yorkers.[25] In the fall of 1998, ENYF! started small, with one community gardener and John Ameroso, a Cornell Cooperative Extension agent, selling produce on a door propped up on two chairs. Over twenty years later, the staff has grown from one person to six: a project director, agriculture director, markets and outreach coordinator, development director, youth program director, and community gardens organizer.

The nine-month paid youth internship program, nonexistent at first, now includes over thirty youths at a time and uses food as a lens to examine issues of social justice—specifically, how urban agriculture in East New York emerged in opposition to systemic processes of racial discrimination, segregation, and disinvestment.[26] The program engages the youths in running the half-acre UCC Youth Farm and the Wednesday and Saturday farmers markets, as well as assisting hundreds of community gardeners. Through these experiences the youths develop knowledge of and skills related to agricultural and ecological systems, bodily health, community development, leadership, entrepreneurship, and social justice. The program's ultimate goal is to create a new generation of leaders from and for East New York.

The ENYF! farmers markets have been critical to realizing the organization's food justice goals as well.[27] Through the organization's embrace of food assistance programs and purchasing power programs, the market has expanded from selling what one community gardener grew to selling produce from several small rural farmers, two urban farms, a handful of community gardeners who regularly rent tables, and tens of gardeners who sell at the share table every week—which has helped secure residents' right to fresh and affordable local food. The farmers market are about more than that, though. Given their location in East New York, ENYF! specializes in Caribbean plants, including bitter melon, hot peppers, bush beans, long beans, and Malabar spinach, and it organizes festivals for residents that celebrate these foods and their importance to Black, Latinx, and Caribbean identity. The farmers markets are subsequently a space for culinary justice; interracial empowerment; and the affirmation of Black, Latinx, and Caribbean lives.

In addition to the youth program and the farmers markets, ENYF! has worked with residents and the Green Thumb program of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to secure the right to land for residents who want to garden and turn vacant city-owned lots into a community resource (map 2). Today, ENYF! directly manages two urban farms and two community gardens and works with residents in nearly forty community gardens. This struggle for land justice is important, since the white upper class in New York City has long criminalized the food production practices of immigrant communities, working-class communities, and communities of color under the claims that their residents need to be integrated into Anglophone culture, their practices stand in the way of development, and their way of life constitutes a threat to the propertied class.[28] ENYF!'s fight for the community's right to land resists these displacement practices by securing for residents a space where they can reaffirm their ties to the land, embrace their cultural and ethnoracial identities, and grow culturally appropriate food for East New Yorkers. Consequently, securing access to land for food production empowers residents to refuse a forced assimilation to whiteness and the ultra-processed foods of Big Food.[29]



MAP 2. There are more than forty gardens that work with ENYF!. LIRR is the Long Island Rail Road. (Map created by Trevor Myers.)

Thus, ENYF! is more than just a local food organization and does not treat food as a stand-alone or single-issue problem. This approach is due, in no small part, to ENYF!'s being housed within UCC, with its long history of social justice organizing. For ENYF!, food justice involves contesting institutional racism and political marginalization through a politics that is grounded in social justice, racial equity, and community self-determination and that aims to regain decision-making power over the environment where residents live, love, work, play, learn, pray, and grow and eat food. *Growing Gardens, Building Power* aims to tell this story of food justice in East New York to challenge power relations within the food movement that privilege whiteness and a particular form of affluent food movement politics as the only politics of the food movement.

From the Margins to the Mainstream: The Importance of the Food Justice Movement

East New Yorkers are not the only group involved in food-based activism, nor are they an outlier in the food justice movement. Many Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous communities are organizing to address social, economic, and environmental inequities under the slogan of food justice.[30] The food justice movement has similarities to the traditional politics of the food movement, particularly the latter movement's critique of Big Ag and Big Food as detrimental to democracy, small farmers, people's bodies, and the planet.[31] At the same time, the food justice movement shifts attention away from privileging environmental sustainability and small farmers and toward emphasizing the role and effects of institutional racism and white supremacy in shaping the distribution of benefits and burdens in both the conventional and alternative forms of the food system, and how those forms are connected to broader social, political, and economic structures and institutions.[32] In moving beyond just food, the food justice movement aims to push the food movement to address the intersections of food and institutional racism in housing; education; employment; transportation; land use planning; and the criminal justice, banking, and financial systems.

The focus on racism and white supremacy emerges from the food justice movement's roots in environmental justice, civil rights, labor rights, and immigrant rights organizing.[33] Given the roots of food justice activism in community organizing, food inequities are not seen as simple technical problems to be solved by political officials, corporations, or philanthropic foundations.[34] Instead, inequitable food relations are framed as social problems that require the restructuring of power relations between racial and economic groups and the mobilization of those who are encountering injustice to end it.[35] This empowerment-based social change model is central to food justice activism and

entails a move from the stand-alone distributive justice framework, which is often aligned with technocratic or elite-led solutions, toward the realization of procedural justice for marginalized communities. Such a shift entails not merely reducing disproportionate burdens—such as pesticide exposure, food-based health inequities (such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and obesity), and lack of access to a grocery store—but also realizing the right to food, democratizing control over the decision-making structures that shape economic, political, and food systems, as well as creating the conditions for the self-determination of communities of color.

Despite decades of efforts by the food justice movement to address inequities in the food system and the broader social system, the face, voice, and politics of the food movement have generally not been those of working-class people, immigrants, and people of color, nor has the movement been centered in communities of color such as East New York and community-based organizations such as ENYF![36] The marginalization of the food justice movement within the food movement has meant that food justice advocates have generally been excluded from the discussion of whom the food movement represents, what it is about, and what its tactics, strategies, and demands should be. Consequently, in the past an individual participating in the food movement might have presumed that there existed, more or less, one unified food movement with shared goals and common values. However over the past decade, activists and scholars have challenged this image by emphasizing how the food justice movement and the broader food movement differ in their political aspirations, tactics, strategies, institutional barriers, and organizational cultures.[37] Because of this work, it is increasingly clear that the food movement is not unified but is shaped by coalitions and rifts, similarities and differences, and vast inequities and injustices. It is a movement made up of movements that may come together on certain issues but are often divided on others.

A key point of contention between the food justice movement and the broader food movement has been the failure of the latter to prioritize or even address racial, ethnic, and class inequities within and outside of the food system. This has pushed the food justice movement to challenge three core aspects of food movement politics: the sustainability bias of the food movement, the missionary mentality of local food access projects, and the conventional framing of communities of color as food deserts and food swamps.

The Poverty of Sustainability

Despite the food movement's assertions that going local can build an alternative to Big Ag and Big Food, its market-as-movement politics has long privileged individual health, small farmers, and environmental sustainability over labor rights, the right to food, and social justice in general.[38] This narrow politics has subsequently created a feedback loop between the discourses, economic

models, and members of the food movement that reproduces attitudinal and institutional racism in the food system by excluding working-class communities of color.[39] Examples of this are the outright avoidance of working-class communities of color by farmers markets and the economic failure of farmers markets in these communities due to market prices that are too expensive for residents.[40]

Beyond the limits of political consumerism, the food movement's focus on saving small farmers ignores the reality that the majority of workers in the food system are not farmers but fast-food workers, restaurant workers, and farmworkers, and most of these workers are not white males but people of color, and women—groups whose members are paid the lowest wages in the United States and struggle with hunger, food insecurity, sexual harassment, and workplace injuries at much higher rates than the average worker.[41] Thus, a market-as-movement politics that favors secession from, rather than confrontation with, corporations and the state is subsequently claimed to be unjust since it does not try to improve the working conditions of millions of working-class people.[42] Such a politics is also framed as self-defeating in terms of building a transformative social movement because incorporating social justice concerns as well as sustainability concerns is central to expanding who is part of the food movement, who leads it, what issues it addresses, and thus its power to effect social change.[43]

To shift the discourses, economic models, and politics of the food movement, environmental justice and food justice advocates contend that there is a need to move beyond environmental sustainability to just sustainabilities, which would put equity politics at the core of sustainability politics.[44] Three forms of justice are central to just sustainabilities: procedural, substantive, and distributive. Procedural justice emphasizes the inclusion of all people, particularly members of marginalized groups, in the structures of decision making. Substantive justice refers to human rights and often asserts that people have a right to housing, food, health care, and clean air and water. Distributive justice focuses on the equitable distribution of social and environmental benefits and burdens across social groups and ecological landscapes. In privileging justice as well as sustainability, food justice advocates claim that the environmental and food movements, as well as the environmental justice and food justice movements, could be brought together into one large movement that is characterized by multiracial and interclass solidarities. For instance, the food justice movement could couple food and environmental movements with movements organizing around labor rights, immigration rights, and police and prison abolition.[45] According to these advocates, the ability of the food movement to realize such a movement fusion is vital to its future success. Without this transformation, the food movement will limit itself to a niche market for a small percentage of the population, one that can easily exist alongside of Big

Ag and Big Food—even being co-opted by these actors through the industrialization and corporatization of organic production practices.[46] *Growing Gardens, Building Power* provides one example of how a food justice organization is pursuing the politics of just sustainabilities and working toward movement fusion.

The Missionary Mentality of Local Food Access Projects

Recently, the food movement has attempted to address the critiques of food justice advocates by bringing local chemical-free produce to working-class communities of color through farmers markets, community supported agriculture programs, school gardens, and community gardens. Despite their best efforts, many of these local food access projects have fallen into what Branden Born and Mark Purcell call "the local trap," which privileges ends over means and presumes that local food projects will inherently achieve social justice and environmental sustainability when they may not.[47] Julie Guthman's work, in particular, has underscored the fact that these efforts often reflect a disempowering missionary mentality, as they are operated by middle- and upper-class white people who live outside the community and tend to express a politics that presumes working-class communities of color do not care about healthy food or environmental sustainability.[48] As a result, these projects tend to have low levels of community participation because they are not organic to the community.[49] They also tend to exude a colorblind racism that discounts the role of white privilege and white supremacy in generating food inequities, while reproducing them through their food politics.[50]

In privileging outcome over process, projects that claim to achieve food justice may fail to address procedural justice (a central component of the politics of just sustainabilities) and fall into what I call the access trap, as they presume that the key problem to be resolved is the community's lack of geographic access to food rather than the community's economic and political marginalization.[51] If local food access projects want to create the conditions for food justice in working-class communities of color, they need to focus on more than just food: they need to challenge anti-Blackness and restructure power relations along racial, ethnic, and class lines to facilitate the redistribution of land, income, and wealth to communities of color.[52] Until local food access projects do this, they will continue to be paternalistic; deficit-oriented; and unable to challenge the social relations that produce food inequities. *Growing Gardens, Building Power* is the account of how one community rejected the access trap and worked toward procedural justice and self-determination by and for East New Yorkers.

The Politics of Food Deserts and Food Swamps

The food movement is not the only actor that has sought to bring fresh and affordable produce to working-class communities of color. In fact, the food

movement's turn toward reducing food access barriers is reflective of the national debate on how to end food deserts (areas where residents have limited or no access to produce) and food swamps (areas where residents' access to produce is minimal compared to their access to fast-food restaurants, bodegas, and ultra-processed foods).[53] Shaped in large part by public health scholars, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the food movement, the debate about food deserts and food swamps has subsequently led to a multitude of initiatives to close the food gap—the gap in geographic access to fresh and affordable food between working-class and upper-class communities.[54] These initiatives include bringing community supported agriculture programs, community gardens, urban farms, farmers markets, and corner stores to working-class communities. However, the most popular policy intervention of municipal, state, and federal governments has focused on closing the grocery gap—the gap in the number of grocery stores and supermarkets between working-class and upper-class communities. This has occurred through trying to facilitate grocery store and supermarket development in working-class communities by way of public-private partnerships that rely on low-cost financing, tax abatements, and zoning exemptions.[55] The belief is that through subsidizing the business costs of grocery retailers, produce will once again become accessible in working-class communities.

Notwithstanding the popularity of these initiatives, there are several problems with them. One problem is that they end up resorting to an environmental determinism that presumes that merely changing the physical layout of communities will result in changes in the food that residents eat. Existing research on the food environments of working-class communities does not support such a premise: rather, it underscores the fact that poverty and economic inequality are the central issues.[56] Another problem is that while quantitative and spatial analysis can tell us what constitutes a food desert, where food deserts exist, and how many people live in them, such analysis has generally ignored the historical relations that shape food inequities. Through investigating the social, economic, and political relations that produce the grocery gap, it becomes clear that the inequities impacting working-class communities of color emerge from racialized investment practices.[57] The ahistorical and geographic-centric framing of the food desert, food swamp, food gap, and grocery gap concepts has therefore been criticized by food justice activists and scholars because it conflates symptoms with root causes. In rejecting these terms, activists and scholars have begun to use the language of food apartheid.[58] Leah Penniman, of Soul Fire Farm in upstate New York, elucidates why she uses food apartheid and rejects the language of food desert: "Apartheid in South Africa was a system of legalized segregation that prevented certain people from accessing all the things you need to survive in life: good education, good food, political power. . . . Apartheid is a human created system of oppression that is not natural and that

strives to destroy the vitality of whole communities. And so because certain neighborhoods not having access to good food is a human created system, . . . we want to change. We like to call it what it is."[59]

In focusing on social relations rather than physical geography, food justice advocates underscore the fact that food inequities are created by state and corporate actors that have denied communities of color the income, wealth, and decision-making power needed to create thriving small businesses, living-wage jobs, and robust systems for high-quality education and affordable housing. Subsidizing the costs of grocery stores in and of itself does not change the social structures that keep communities of color poor and marginalized. Instead, what is needed are demand-side policies that increase the income and wealth of households in communities of color, for it is through such policies that residents can afford to buy good food. Additionally, such policies will not emerge unless working-class communities of color have power to shape the development of their community at municipal, state, and federal levels. *Growing Gardens, Building Power* is one account of a community advocating for and working toward such a demand-side politics.

The Politics of Food Justice: Radical, Reformist, or Neoliberal?

The three critiques discussed above are important because if taken seriously, they have the potential to transform food politics by shifting it away from a food-centric distributive justice lens and toward addressing the deep racial inequities that shape the entire social system. At the same time, this potential is molded by the trajectory of the food justice movement, and questions remain about whether its politics will be radical, reformist, or neoliberal. Will the food justice movement follow the broader food movement and become an "alternative" movement that aims for "incremental erosion at the edges of the political" and "economic structures," or will it become an "oppositional" movement that "seek[s] to create a new structural configuration?"[60] This is a question that many in the movement are asking themselves.

For numerous scholars, food justice movements based in urban agriculture tend to lack even these reformist or radical capacities because they generally reproduce rather than challenge racial neoliberalism. Alison Hope Alkon claims that they do so in three ways.[61] First, local food projects produce neoliberalized individuals through their emphasis on cultivating the qualities of entrepreneurialism, healthy eating, and personal responsibility. Second, they prioritize social change through individualized consumer actions rather than collective action as citizens. Third, in taking over responsibility for feeding marginalized communities from the state, they are complicit in racial neoliberalism's retrenchment of the welfare state and its refusal to secure residents' right to food. Eric Holt-Giménez and Yi Wang are similarly concerned about the long-term political potential of the food justice movement. For these authors,

the radical politics of the food justice movement are found in "structural critiques of racism and classism" that assert the importance of "economic democracy for underserved communities of color, including the transfer of ownership, property, and leadership to those most negatively affected by the industrial food system."[62] However, these transformative equity-oriented demands are often subsumed or marginalized by a reformist "food access" politics that "frames food-system inequities in terms of food production and acquisition rather than structural inequality" and "result[s] in an emphasis on enhancing food skills and alternative means of food access for low-income households."[63] Research in Oakland, California, and New Orleans, Louisiana, echoes these worries, as other authors found food justice politics "heavily influenced and weakened by the neoliberal settings within which they exist."[64]

There are also growing fears that urban agriculture projects oriented toward food justice may unwittingly operate as a form of green gentrification that creates a community that appeals to middle- and upper-class white people as a place to live and more lucrative for developers, real estate agents, and city officials as a site for displacement-oriented redevelopment.[65] If this is the case and the food justice movement remains tied to a reformist or neoliberal politics, racial neoliberalism's urban governance strategies raise serious questions about whether and how the movement can play a role in asserting the right of working-class communities of color to the city.

Despite these concerns, Nathan McClintock's research argues that the framing of urban agriculture as either radical or neoliberal is a "false dualism," one that ignores the political potential of the movement in challenging conventional social relations, property relations, and zoning relations—as well as the larger development politics of municipalities—through rebuilding the commons.[66] In McClintock's eyes, urban agriculture has the potential to re-embed land, food, and property relations in a moral economy rather than a market economy and thereby create social relations regulated by noneconomic logics and practices.[67] Community land trusts are one example of organizations with this potential, and the GreenThumb program in New York City is another. Prior work by Alkon supports this more nuanced understanding of the urban food justice movement as oppositional to, rather than supportive of, racial neoliberalism, based on its creation and promotion of worker cooperatives and its mobilization of economic justice campaigns for workers in the food system.[68] Alkon contends that each of these actions by the food justice movement creates barriers, challenges, or alternatives to racial neoliberalism and holds out hope that another world is not just possible but already in existence. Furthermore, the turn toward community gardening and agriculture within urban Black communities needs to be contextualized within the history of the Black freedom struggle, which has entailed the pursuit of land and economic self-reliance through agriculture.[69] Obtaining agricultural land by and for Black

communities has been framed as a way to build spaces of self-protection, create a foundation for the physiological health of Black people, and establish an anchor institution for community-based economies outside of the white capitalist power structure. In this regard, what is occurring right now in many urban Black communities is merely the latest manifestation of a centuries-long struggle by Black Americans for land, food, and freedom.

The political trajectory of the food justice movement has also been shaped by power struggles within the movement over its relationships with corporations, philanthropic foundations, and the state. Such struggles were brought to the surface in 2011 by two events. The first was when First Lady Michelle Obama formed an alliance with Walmart and other big-box grocery retailers to combat food deserts. The second was when Will Allen of Growing Power, a prominent food justice organization in Milwaukee, accepted a million-dollar donation from Walmart to expand Growing Power's urban agriculture program nationally. Both of these events have been subject to criticism by people in the food justice movement and brought to light rifts within the movement over who is considered part of the movement, what its goals are, and what means would achieve these goals.[70] One discussion revolved around whether multinational corporations and low-wage employers can be part of the solution to inequitable food relations and therefore members of the food justice movement. Many people answered no to both questions. The philanthropy of Walmart, in particular, raised concerns about whether and how the politics of the food justice movement could be co-opted and weakened through the wealth, power, and marketing savvy of multinational corporations. Another discussion focused on Growing Power's acceptance of Walmart's donation, based on the pragmatic and fiscal needs of its nationwide expansion plan, and pushed people to voice their unease about the ability of food justice organizations to realize their long-term goals (be they reformist or radical) when the organizations are heavily dependent on grants from philanthropic foundations. In short, could a funding structure that reinforces the power of corporations and upper-class white people over working-class communities of color ever be a pathway toward food justice?[71] *Growing Gardens, Building Power* engages with these debates by detailing how ENYF! has grappled with the limits of philanthropy—as well as the tensions among radicalism, reformism, and neoliberalism—in their quest to use food as a community mobilization strategy.

Toward a Just Food System and Society

How are communities organizing to address social, economic, and ecological inequities in the food system? How do race and class positions shape food justice projects? What barriers exist in building community food systems that aim to address racial inequities? These questions lie at the heart of this book

and food justice scholarship in general. Using ethnography, interviews, and a critical analysis of the secondary literature, this book details the historical roots of food inequities in East New York and how the efforts of ENYF! to realize food justice have brought it into conflict with government agencies, philanthropic foundations, and corporations, as well as the food movement itself.[72] By describing this history and these conflicts, the book emphasizes how the urban food justice movement faces numerous obstacles to achieving its broader transformative goals—some internal to the movement, but many more external to it. In particular, the book illuminates five key issues that the urban food justice movement is wrestling with:

1. How people conceptualize the roots of and solutions to food inequities;
2. The displacement-oriented development politics of the neoliberal city;
3. The role of the state in addressing inequitable food relations;
4. The limitations of nonprofit funding structures; and
5. The urbanization of Walmart.

By grounding these five key issues within the history of East New York and ENYF!, *Growing Gardens, Building Power* tells a story of what is possible when community members bond through food and organize to realize a more just world. At the same time, it also tells a story that raises serious concerns about the long-term viability and efficacy of a food justice movement that faces significant hurdles when it comes to embracing a reformist politics, let alone a transformative politics. Even with these barriers, the story of how East New Yorkers have approached these hurdles underscores the fact that the food justice movement is strongest when it addresses the structural roots of inequities in the food system; challenges anti-Blackness; prioritizes procedural, substantive, and distributive justice; moves beyond supply-side to demand-side politics; and uses food as a conduit to building community power. At its heart, the food justice movement is about more than mere access to food. It is about creating a just and sustainable society, which requires demanding more than just democratic control over the food system: it entails democratizing the entire social, political, and economic structure of the United States.

Outline of the Rest of the Book

Chapter 2 connects East New York's current food inequities to its social, political, and economic history—which includes redlining, urban renewal, white flight, planned shrinkage, and mass incarceration, as well as the rise of neoconservatism and racial neoliberalism. In its discussion of this racialized history, the book connects white America's resistance to and repression of the Black

freedom struggle, and its demands for equity and equality for people of color, to the creation of food inequities for contemporary East New Yorkers.

Through ethnography and interviews with gardeners and ENYF! staff members, chapter 3 explores the activism of community gardeners in East New York that emerged in opposition to planned shrinkage. It discusses the cultural and ethnoracial reasons why gardeners fight for land to grow food in New York City, the ecological philosophies motivating gardeners to grow food in the manner they do, and the economic and social performances embodied in the gardeners' form of urban agriculture. It also discusses how the long-term viability of the gardens and the community economies they create depends upon reshaping the city's development politics. The history of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston is put forth as one possible model for emulation.

The grassroots efforts of residents to revitalize the community through urban agriculture eventually led to the emergence of ENYF! and the creation of two farmers markets to bring fresh local affordable food to residents, an initiative that was pursued even though farmers markets in working-class communities of color generally do not have a strong record of securing the right to food for people of color. Chapter 4 explores how ENYF! has sought to challenge and change this history through using food assistance programs at its farmers markets. Discussions with ENYF! staff members emphasized that despite the importance of such programs for residents, improvements in their funding, organization, and marketing are needed. They also underscored that a counternarrative is needed to stop the Right's attack on food assistance programs, for ENYF! staff members such a counternarrative is grounded in the premise that the government is obligated to meet people's basic needs. I build upon this counternarrative through incorporating the language of the affirmative state in making a case for a government that works toward racial equity.

The efforts of ENYF! to obtain land for food production and create farmers markets that secure residents' right to food are not the only day-to-day tasks of the organization. The most serious challenge facing ENYF! is securing enough funding to achieve its mission. Chapter 5 approaches this problem through investigating the tensions that exist between a community-based organization committed to food justice and funding streams that create dependency on either grants from philanthropic institutions or produce sales to affluent consumers. In the discussion of ENYF!'s strategies for navigating this funding landscape, it becomes apparent that philanthropic funding structures often try to push food justice organizations away from the pursuit of a radical politics committed to social transformation in favor of a reformist politics focused on reducing gaps in food access or a neoliberal politics invested in entrepreneurial initiatives. To address this problem, ENYF! staff members contend that taxes need to be raised on the wealthy to curtail the power of foundations and shift the funding streams of community-based organizations from private

grants to public funds via the state. I contend that this shift can be achieved if the food justice movement is able to reframe how the public conceptualizes democracy, freedom, and taxes.

The food justice movement in East New York is not limited to building an alternative food system rooted in community gardens and urban farms. Chapter 6 shifts the book's focus to how the community came to be at center stage in a nationwide battle between two opposing views of how to address neighborhoods underserved by grocery stores, one emphasizing supply side economics (Michelle Obama and Walmart), one emphasizing demand side economics (the Good Food, Good Jobs coalition). In juxtaposing these two views, the chapter explores why Walmart is targeting underserved communities as an economic growth strategy and how it tries to legitimate this strategy by using City Hall's existing growth machine and grocery gap discourses. The chapter then discusses how and why community, labor, and civic actors fought against a proposed Walmart supercenter and for a unionized grocery store in East New York; how and why they won; and what this means for the food justice movement.

The conclusion, chapter 7, reflects on the experiences of East New Yorkers and ENYF! discussed in the book, underscores the link between food justice and just sustainabilities, and closes by exploring six significant challenges that are shaping the future of ENYF! and the urban food justice movement. In discussing each of these challenges, the conclusion sketches how the food justice movement can challenge racial neoliberalism through a reformist politics that intends to improve the lives of communities of color within capitalism as well as a transformative politics that aims to move beyond capitalism by expanding and strengthening noncapitalist relations.

2

The Social Roots of Food Inequities in East New York

In the summer of 1966, New York City shifted its attention from the uprisings in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, the respective centers of Black social life in Manhattan and Brooklyn, toward East New York. There, in the far eastern corner of northern Brooklyn, a predominantly Italian and Jewish community was quickly becoming a Black, Latinx, and Caribbean community. Social tensions between longtime residents and newcomers had been bubbling up over the previous decade, with racial clashes between white, Black, and Puerto Rican youths becoming a frequent occurrence. Signs in white-owned stores reflected this racialized animosity, stating in no polite terms, "You may take Watts [in Los Angeles], but you'll never take New Lots [a section of East New York]."[1] On July 21, these simmering feelings were brought to a head when an Italian street gang held a march protesting the presence of Black residents with signs that read, "Go Back to Africa, N——s."[2] These youths, more formally known as members of SPONGE, the Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything, sought to protect white East New Yorkers from Blacks and Puerto Ricans through verbal intimidation and physical violence. Youths of color responded to the marchers by throwing bottles and soda cans at them and were subsequently chased by the white youths.

During the pursuit, gunfire erupted from one of the neighborhood rooftops, striking and killing an eleven-year-old Black boy. As news of the incident spread throughout New Lots, Black and Caribbean residents took to the streets, and

a collective rage filled the air with screams, shouts, and chants. Garbage cans were thrown through store windows, fire hydrants were forcibly opened, and clothing stores had spontaneous five-finger discounts. Sidewalks became littered with shattered glass, and water flooded the streets. In the end, close to a thousand police officers descended upon the area to regain order and restore peace. When Mayor John Lindsay, a white liberal Republican, came to see the destruction, he was told by white residents to "Go back to Africa with the n——s."[3] While Lindsay was taken aback by such statements, this hostility reflected the increasingly common feeling among many white East New Yorkers that liberal politicians, be they Democrat or Republican, were pro-Black and antiwhite, and as such they were personae non gratae.

The events of 1966 hastened the already dramatic transformation of East New York. In a little over six years the community experienced an almost complete racial flip, with the population going from 85 percent white in 1960 to 80 percent people of color by 1966.[4] Many whites who had initially refused to move out of the neighborhood packed up quickly after the riot and joined the exodus to Long Island, Staten Island, Westchester, the Bronx, and New Jersey. Synagogues and churches departed, community centers were vacated, and business flight was endemic. Streets that were once bustling with corporate stores, mom-and-pop establishments, employment opportunities, and foot traffic became shadows of their former selves. New Lots, Blake, Sutter, Belmont, and Pitkin Avenues, once the heart of East New York, were emptied of life as movie theaters shut down; candy, furniture, and grocery stores closed their doors; and the famous Fortunoff jewelry store left. The exodus of retail shops and civic institutions worsened East New York's already bleak economic prospects: the community had lost numerous jobs, factories, and industries after World War II and was reeling from disinvestment due to redlining and urban renewal.[5]

What happened in East New York increased Lindsay's attention to the community and pushed him to speak one month later at a Senate hearing in Washington on the problems facing urban governments. At the hearing he stated that New York would need an additional $50 billion over the next ten years, on top of the $600–$700 million it currently spent annually, to make the city "a thoroughly livable and exciting place in which to live" and thereby counter the violence of "slum dwellers" that was being generated by "an invisible, uncaring government."[6] In Lindsay's eyes, the federal government had chosen Vietnam over East New York, and the two options were mutually exclusive: "For the truth, I'm afraid, is that we cannot achieve either the cities or the society we would like as long as we continue the war in Vietnam. We cannot spend more than $24 billion a year in Vietnam and still rebuild our cities."[7] Democratic Senator Robert F. Kennedy said that the figure of $50 billion was "totally unrealistic" and opposed Lindsay's request for assistance from the federal government.[8] The journalist Jack Newfield best summarized the

reaction of the subcommittee members holding the hearing, writing that it was as if Lindsay "were Allen Ginsberg requesting the legalization of LSD."[9] Despite the negative response that Lindsay received, his figures were not out of line with what was needed. Walter Thabit, a city planner who worked in East New York, stated that merely to counter the community's physical decline would take $400 million: $300 million for new construction, $50 million for the rehabilitation and repair of six thousand units of housing, $10–$20 million for foreclosure prevention, and $20–$40 million for community facilities.[10]

Without significant federal assistance to address the social, economic, and political transformations reshaping Brooklyn in particular and New York City in general, the uprising of 1966 became a significant moment in the conversion of East New York's foodscape from that of grocery stores, butchers, and bakers into one dominated by bodegas and fast-food restaurants. In 2007, East New York had over 170,000 people but only five full-service grocery stores, which collectively had a mere 29,000 square feet of space.[11] Such limited footage meant an average store size of 5,800 square feet and a full-service grocery store area of 0.2 square feet per person.[12] Overall New York City averages are 15,860 square feet and 1.5 square feet, respectively.[13] Both sets of numbers pale in comparison to the average U.S. suburban supermarket, which is over 45,000 square feet.[14]

Unfortunately, the foodscape in East New York is not unique. Research has found that working-class communities of color across the country have innumerable barriers between them and fresh, affordable produce.[15] This chapter builds on this research by connecting the creation of food inequities in East New York to the history of the underdevelopment of communities of color. It discusses how the practices and policies of public and private institutions have created the conditions of food apartheid by systematically denying additional wealth to, and draining existing wealth from, communities of color. Knowing the conditions under which food inequities are created and how they are intertwined with broader social, economic, and political inequities is important because it provides insights into the root causes, rather than the symptoms, of food inequities and underscores the social processes that need to be confronted to address problems that emerge from anti-Blackness, rather than from market failure or a culture of poverty.

The Second Great Migration, New York City, and White Supremacy

The uprising of 1966 constituted a collective protest by Black and Caribbean East New Yorkers against a history of oppression. Many of these residents were part of the Second Great Migration, the movement of nearly six million Black and Caribbean Americans to northern cities between the 1940s and 1970s.[16] As a result of this migration, by the 1970s over half of the Black population in

the United States had moved north and west of the Mason-Dixon line, settling in cities such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, Detroit, Oakland, and Los Angeles. Caribbean Americans moved in record numbers to the greater New York and Miami metropolitan areas. Many of these migrants came to New York City to escape the grinding poverty and omnipresent racism that were facts of life back home. They had hoped that New York City would help them realize the American Dream, but instead many encountered a city that was segregated, engulfed by anti-Blackness, and being torn apart by racialized class conflict.

One of the major issues influencing this conflict was the employment structure of the city. Driven north by forced unemployment through the mechanization of agriculture, the migrants hoped that decent-paying jobs in urban industrial factories would await them and they could follow in the paths of previous generations of immigrants, from the English and Irish to the Italians and Germans.[17] However, these migrants entered the city not during a period of economic growth but during one of economic contraction, technological automation, and the geographic relocation of industry, all of which significantly limited their employment prospects and exacerbated the lack of living-wage jobs. During the 1930s and 1940s, New York City had the largest manufacturing base in the country, with more manufacturing jobs than Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Boston put together.[18] The wartime economy had lifted an entire generation of white workers into middle-class employment, but in the 1950s manufacturing and commercial jobs began to leave the city in droves. Brooklyn was particularly hard hit, with the number of jobs in manufacturing declining from around 235,000 in 1954 to 112,000 in 1976.[19] New York City as a whole had a net loss of over 600,000 jobs between 1965 and 1973.[20] Containerization compounded these issues by eliminating thousands of well-paying blue-collar jobs and foreclosing the employment prospects of generations of would-be dockworkers.[21]

These inequities were amplified by the current and future white workers who sought to maintain their social, economic, and political privileges by resisting the attempts of people of color and their white allies to create equal opportunity hiring structures and end racially segregated industries and workplaces.[22] Attitudinal (as opposed to institutional) racism, racial resentment, and nepotism were particularly strong within the building trades and police and fire departments, creating significant barriers for men of color to acquire unionized living-wage jobs.[23] The situation was often worse for Black women, as they were largely confined to the lowest-paying jobs within the fields of domestic labor and sex work, and if they were able to obtain a job in textile factories, they were often segregated from and paid less than white workers.[24] The outcome of such processes was that from 1965 to 1972 over 750,000 people were added to the welfare rolls of New York City, an option increasingly open to people of color due to the successful mobilizing of the welfare rights movement.[25] In East New

York, welfare rates nearly quadrupled, increasing from 8 percent to 31 percent. The jump indicated how East New Yorkers had become a surplus population unwanted by rural agriculture or urban manufacturing, and one whose members increasingly combined minimum-wage employment, the informal economy, food stamps, and cash welfare payments as a survival strategy.[26]

The denial of jobs (let alone living-wage employment) to people of color was not a stand-alone practice: it coincided with attitudinal and institutional racism in mortgage lending practices that denied households of color access to the chief source of wealth for most Americans: home ownership. Starting in the 1930s, the federal government began to create home ownership programs to generate employment and growth in the construction industry, expand home ownership in working- and middle-class communities, and ensure that existing home owners threatened with foreclosure could keep their homes.[27] These federal programs—which insured private mortgages, extended the length of home loans, and reduced interest rates and the size of down payments for home loans—were tremendously successful in turning America from a nation of renters into a nation of homeowners.

One of the entities created through such legislation was the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which created a new market-based risk-management mapping system to determine loan eligibility based on the quality of the neighborhood where the home was located. The problem with this market-based system was that the four categories of neighborhood created to measure risk were not driven purely by economic calculus. They built upon the existing practices of private banks and mortgage companies that stigmatized both racially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods and exclusively Black neighborhoods as not worthy of investment because they were "of color" and therefore not desirable to middle- and upper-class whites. The federal programs also privileged mortgages for detached single-family homes rather than attached single-family homes or multifamily homes, and the latter two types together constituted the dominant housing stock in urban environments. The outcome of such a classist and racist mapping system was that the "vast majority of [HOLC] loans went to the top two categories," composed largely of detached single-family houses in the suburbs owned by blue- and white-collar white families, while the third and fourth categories "virtually never received HOLC loans" as they were in either racially mixed neighborhoods or all-Black communities.[28] Most notable is that Black communities were always relegated to the fourth, redlined, category (named so because it was coded with the color red), a practice that would be adopted by the Federal Housing Administration, the Veterans Administration, and private mortgage and banking institutions.[29] In all, the mapping techniques of the HOLC became part of a more modern and so-called scientific method to legitimate racialized lending activities that concentrated investment and wealth within white suburban communities.[30]

Redlining practices did not merely deny households of color access to an important method of accumulating wealth: it also deprived them of a voice and a seat at the table of local politics, where homeowners generally have a strong say—which enabled the continued control of municipal politics by and for the benefit of conservative whites.[31] Redlining practices were common for business loans, too, and blocked Black families and communities of color from developing income and wealth through small-business ownership and entrepreneurship.[32] It is important to note that it would be hard to get a business loan from a bank if you did not have a stable, well-paying job or collateral (e.g., a home or a significant amount of money in a savings account), and thus business redlining was interconnected with the racism that confined people of color to unemployment or poverty-level employment and the status of renters. Moreover, as mortgage redlining concentrated power at City Hall among white homeowners, business redlining concentrated power in local chambers of commerce among conservative whites who opposed racial justice and social equity politics, which further harmed Black communities. All of these processes were present in East New York, as the banking industry redlined the entire community.[33]

The result of redlining nationally was a deteriorating urban environment that was seen by white elites as a threat to the tax base and the economic growth potential of cities, areas that have long been the engines of the U.S. economy. Yet instead of opening up home and business loan programs to households of color to stop the manufactured destruction of urban communities, the white elite's response was urban renewal, which used tens of billions of federal dollars to redevelop working-class communities and communities of color through the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.[34] Despite all its promises, urban renewal built less housing than it destroyed and exacerbated the problem of cramped living and unaffordable housing in working-class communities of color. Urban renewal was announced in 1961 for Brownsville, and by 1973 it had "leveled dozens of buildings, but built only a small number of low-income units and not a single unit of the middle-income housing promised."[35] The results were similar in East New York's Model Cities urban renewal area, between Van Sinderen and Pennsylvania Avenues. After the area was marked for renewal, what occurred was not redevelopment but capital flight, decay, vacancies, foreclosure, arson, and city repossession.[36] Urban renewal at the national level was no better. As of June 30, 1967, over 400,000 residential units had been demolished and only 1,670 low-rent public housing units had been built on the same sites.[37] In total, from 1949 to 1973 urban renewal dispossessed over a million residents of more than 2,500 neighborhoods in 993 cities.[38]

One of the reasons why urban renewal failed to rebuild working-class communities of color for their existing residents was that many local elites never intended the program to be used for such purposes.[39] Urban renewal funds were

used strategically by local elites to level these neighborhoods, displace their residents, and redevelop the neighborhoods from the ground up for middle- and upper-class whites. This is why urban renewal was called "Negro removal" by Black residents.[40] For instance, through the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, Black communities in New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Detroit, Newark, and New Haven were destroyed and replaced with museums, universities, office complexes, sporting arenas, and highways designed to make it more efficient for white suburbanites to access work and consumption spaces in the urban core.[41]

Urban renewal's demolition of entire communities of color destroyed them from the outside in and the inside out. Mindy Fullilove has named the scars of living through urban renewal "root shock," which she defines as the "traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem"—a reaction that does not end when the event is over but "lives with the individual for a lifetime."[42] Root shock has severe negative effects for individuals and communities because it "ruptures bonds . . . undermines trust, increases anxiety . . . destabilizes relationships, destroys social, emotional, and financial resources, and increases the risk for every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heat attack."[43] Urban renewal was therefore very effective in "disabl[ing] powerful mechanisms of community functioning" in ways that have severely limited Black Americans' economic and political power.[44] This was the case in East New York, where many of the networks and institutions that undergirded Italian and Jewish East Brooklyn left with white flight or were upended through urban renewal. This created a political vacuum, since newer Black and Caribbean American residents had few individuals, groups, or organizations to help them navigate the ropes, mobilize people, and articulate their grievances and demands to City Hall.[45]

Urban renewal can therefore be understood as a government-led eviction program for communities of color, one that stands in stark contrast to the massive federal funding that pushed many whites out of urban environments and into suburban homeownership and their children into well-funded public schools, higher education, and living-wage blue- or white-collar employment. By 1965, the "federal government had subsidized 10 million" suburban units, "only 2 percent [of which] were available to" people of color.[46] Compare this to the 1,670 low-rent public housing units that had been built on urban renewal sites by 1967, sites where 400,000 residential units had previously stood.[47] These racialized housing policies continued a long history of public-private alliances that channeled investment and wealth to white communities and away from communities of color. The most notable of these alliances is the New Deal, a package of regulations, policies, programs, and projects that primarily benefited white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and ethnic whites—those of Italian, Irish, Polish, German, Jewish, and Scandinavian descent.[48]

These racialized patterns of investment and disinvestment played an important role in restructuring the foodscape of East New York through the twin processes of supermarket flight (the movement of grocery stores and supermarkets from cities to the suburbs) and supermarket redlining (the refusal of grocery stores and supermarkets to invest in working-class urban communities of color).[49] The racial and economic transformation of the community—exacerbated by redlining, urban renewal, and the federal government's underwriting of suburban sprawl—contributed to the movement of white-owned butchers, bakers, and grocery stores to the suburbs.[50] In moving to the suburbs in the tristate area, grocery stores were chasing larger profits by reducing their land, labor, and tax costs; increasing their store sizes; and expanding their range of premium-priced products—a process that continues to this day.[51] Many of the grocery stores in East New York were not replaced or taken over by people of color because the financing needed to do so was not available. The flip side of this was that the grocery stores that did remain in East New York became increasingly undercapitalized. But because they had a captive audience, prices went up, the quality of produce went down, and there was a shift toward ultra-processed foods that had longer shelf lives and lower price points.[52] In this regard, the transformation of East New York's foodscape occurred precisely because it reflected the second-class status of East New Yorkers in American society.

The War on Poverty: Race and the Limits of the White Welfare State

While all was not well in East New York in the 1960s, that was also the decade when white America rediscovered domestic poverty amid the height of affluence. The civil rights and Black Power movements and urban rebellion in general turned white America's attention to the oppression of communities of color and contributed to the increasing national focus on how to address racial inequality, an energy that fueled President John F. Kennedy's New Frontier programs and President Lyndon Baines Johnson's Great Society initiatives. The most notable and far-reaching of these efforts was Johnson's War on Poverty, which emerged in 1964 and included the creation of Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, and food stamps.[53] It also channeled millions of federal dollars to local antipoverty agencies, primary and secondary education in working-class communities, and job training and skill building programs for working-class youths. The belief was that these programs would address the conditions producing civil disobedience, urban rebellions, and racial conflict by improving the educational institutions, employment prospects, and social safety net for people of color.

Fifty years later, the programs that emerged from the War on Poverty have indeed reduced poverty and improved the quality of life for millions

of people, most notably through the expansion of social security and cash welfare programs. Despite these improvements, there were notable limits to the War on Poverty that would eventually dampen the potential of initiatives that were expected to address the social, economic, and political marginalization of communities such as East New York.[54] One of the problems emerging from the War on Poverty was that it tended to reproduce the exclusion of people of color from, as well as their marginalization within, the wage economy due to a focus on social assistance programs and vocational skills programs as the primary way to increase household incomes. The emphasis on vocational skills programs in the War on Poverty occurred for ideological, fiscal, and pragmatic reasons. Ideologically, many liberals and Democratic politicians believed that poverty was a result of people lacking employable skills or a work ethic. Thus, poverty was seen as more of a cultural than a structural matter.[55] The solution was to give the unemployed poor the education and training they needed to acquire jobs. These programs were also favored because they were seen as more cost-effective and easier to implement and having quicker returns on investment, compared to larger macroeconomic strategies such as direct government job creation or government incentivized job creation within the private sector.[56] Advocates for the programs also presumed that economic growth by itself would create good jobs.

The major problem with prioritizing job training programs, according to critics, was the presumption that there were enough good jobs to go around and that the focus needed to be on connecting the unemployed to those jobs.[57] In fact, there was already a shortage of good jobs, the deindustrializing economy was increasingly eliminating middle-class jobs, and people of color were quickly becoming a surplus population that was desired less and less as a source of cheap labor by industry. Under such conditions, job training programs would primarily operate to turn the unemployed into the working poor. Instead, critics contended that government efforts should have been directed at creating living-wage jobs for working-class communities of color and a guaranteed annual income for all Americans.[58] The focus on trying to improve the skills of individual workers rather than restructuring labor markets to address racial, ethnic, and class inequities was a key limit of the War on Poverty initiatives. This was the case in East New York, where War on Poverty initiatives overwhelmingly focused on short-term job training, youth employment, and expanding social service programs—efforts that reduced and managed poverty but did not end it, as they did nothing to counter the economic structure in East New York that was organized around low-wage jobs.[59]

Besides job training, the federal government created programs to finance Black-owned small businesses, viewing them as a means of job creation and economic development in communities of color.[60] The hope was that these programs for Black capitalism would avoid the stigma whites attached to civil rights

and welfare rights initiatives and therefore garner widespread support from both white and Black Americans.[61] One of these programs was the Equal Opportunity Loan program, which was born out of Title IV of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.[62] Other programs were offered through the Commerce Department's Office of Minority Business Enterprise and the Small Business Administration.[63] Collectively, these programs were seen by advocates as necessary to jump-starting the creation of a Black capitalist class because potential small-business owners of color often lacked the liquid assets and collateral to secure a loan or, if they had enough start-up capital, were generally denied loans by the private banking system. Such programs also happened to be very popular in the fast-food industry, which had spent years lobbying the federal government on behalf of them as a way to subsidize its economic expansion plans into urban communities.[64]

The Small Business Administration responded to this lobbying by defining franchisees as small-business owners and financing over 16,000 franchise loans from 1959 to 1979 (most of which went to fast-food restaurants), to the tune of $1 billion.[65] And since its program guaranteed 90 percent of the loan amount provided by private banks to franchisees, the program created little financial risk for the lending institution or the fast-food company.[66] Thus, at the same time as New York City became increasingly Black and Caribbean American and grocery stores were being redlined, the federal government subsidized the movement of McDonald's, Burger King, and Kentucky Fried Chicken into the five boroughs and the targeting of people of color as the consumer base of fast-food companies.[67] Such subsidies continued through the 1990s, under the same premise of "job creation."[68] The legacy of this is that in 2018, East New York had forty-one fast-food establishments, making it "the biggest [food] swamp in New York City."[69]

For all their good intentions, government programs emphasizing Black capitalism suffered from several of the same limits as the other initiatives of the War on Poverty. While a small number of Black entrepreneurs did become millionaires through these programs, fast-food jobs are organized by companies, with the help of government, as low-road jobs (precarious jobs with low wages and no benefits) rather than high-road jobs (jobs that offer living wages, local hiring provisions, stable schedules, employment security, the right to bargain collectively, and high-quality health and retirement benefits).[70] In fact, the fast-food industry pays the minimum wage to a higher percentage of its workforce than any other industry in the United States. And the average worker in the fast-food workforce is not a teenager working part-time after school but a twenty-nine-year-old high school graduate relying on Medicaid, food stamps, and child care subsidies because their job does not pay them enough to house, clothe, feed, and care for themselves and their families.[71] Consequently, Black capitalist programs might have created jobs for the unemployed, but fast-food

restaurants did not and still do not create economic security, ladders of mobility to the middle class, or the disposable income needed to afford good food. Rather, they have played a role in increasing the ranks of the working poor and inequitable food relations. All of this is why in the last decade East New Yorkers have participated in the Fight for $15 and engaged in strikes against fast-food companies for their unjust labor practices.[72] For such workers, the goal is to turn these low-road jobs into high-road ones.

For a smaller and more confrontational group of Democrats, the War on Poverty could address racial inequities not through upgrading labor market skills or creating Black capitalism but by mobilizing working-class communities of color to contest their marginalization from public investment.[73] This could occur through the creation of Community Action Agencies (CAA) via the Community Action Program (CAP). In many areas this power-building strategy to transform the relationships among local government, political machines, and communities of color was successful. Grassroots organizations in Houston, Newark, and Bedford-Stuyvesant used the CAP to strengthen and scale up existing social justice struggles over education, housing, and jobs.[74] Nonetheless, many organizations had only limited gains due to economic and political structures at the regional, state, and national levels that small grassroots organizations could not address by themselves. Gains from CAP mobilization were also limited because the CAA faced budgetary challenges, and its limited resources often prevented the creation of powerful grassroots movements that could effectively challenge local political machines.[75] Additionally, in other communities—including Chicago, Philadelphia, and Atlanta—the CAA became an appendage of the existing political machine and tended to reinforce its control over jobs and services.[76]

Many of these problems occurred in East New York, where the lack of strong civic institutions stifled community mobilization, dampened electoral participation, and increased the power of the reigning political machine.[77] These problems were reinforced by the emergence of a new Black and Caribbean American managerial class that initially worked with the older white elite but eventually took control of political offices, community boards, school boards, and antipoverty agencies.[78] Ana Aguirre, the executive director of UCC, emphasized this relationship when I spoke with her. According to her, "If you wanted a certain job in the school system, with the city, or a local development agency, then you needed to support certain officials to get that job." Such a patronage system in East New York pushed politicians away from mobilizing the electorate for social change in favor of combining campaign contributions from outside the community with the long-standing practices of nepotism, corruption, and extortion.[79] The precarity of antipoverty funding also contributed to political de-escalation as community-based organizations sought to maintain their long-term viability through asserting control over funding, jobs,

and clients rather than mobilizing residents. In East New York, the East New York Community Corporation fought other antipoverty programs for control of urban renewal funding, and the Council Against Poverty renamed itself the Council for a Better East New York as it shifted from a community action program to a service-oriented program.[80] Through such tactics, antipoverty organizations in East New York lost their grassroots orientation, oppositional energy, and mobilization capacity and became incorporated into the welfare state's technocratic poverty management apparatus.

Integration or Segregation: The Fight over Public Education in East Brooklyn

Despite the intent of the War on Poverty to temper racial discord and mitigate the most egregious abuses of white supremacy, many white communities continued to reject the major tenets of the civil rights movement, the Black Power movement, and the War on Poverty while intensifying their protests against Big Government and support for states' rights and community control on both racial and economic grounds. This was the case in Canarsie, a community to the south of Brownsville and southwest of East New York, whose resistance to racial integration was documented by Jonathan Rieder.[81]

Emerging on the edge of Jamaica Bay in the 1950s on filled in swampland, Canarsie quickly became populated by Italian and Jewish families who had left Brownsville and East New York for the home ownership and class mobility offered to whites in the new community by the postwar boom. At the time, this upward mobility was precarious, and the mass migration of Black and Caribbean Americans to Brooklyn brought great anxiety to white residents who were fearful that Canarsie would become similar to the working-class neighborhoods they had just left behind. This anxiety was magnified by the fact that these new entrants to the middle class could not easily move away from Canarsie: new mortgages and limited savings fixed them in the community. Moreover, there was nowhere further south to go: Jamaica Bay blocked them in. The result was that white Canarsieans perceived themselves as under threat and interpreted "the shifts in Brooklyn's racial complexion as an invasion by a hostile army."[82] They felt that their only options were to hold their ground or leave New York City, so they chose to fight for what they had and opposed racial integration in defense of their right to "ethnic succession."[83]

The white community's assertion of ethnic succession became front-page news in the fall of 1972 when a proposal by New York City's Board of Education to bus Black children from Brownsville to Canarsie instigated a weeklong boycott of public schools by white students. Ninety percent of white students participated, with 1,500 protestors waving signs reading "Canarsie schools for Canarsie children."[84] White students at Canarsie High School demanded the

"expansion of surveillance" to quell racial fears and unrest, with their goals including "depriv[ing] students of rights of access and movement" and giving security guards powers "to search and seize property."[85] They also wanted quotas for white guards, since they claimed that Black guards did not protect "their interests" and favored Blacks over whites.[86] White Canarsie's collective rage against educational integration was principally due to the conviction that it was the beginning of residential integration, which was believed to bring with it crime, drugs, lower property values, racial mixing, and the loss of middle-class status. To avoid this potential disaster, white residents used crime patrols and neighborhood watches to keep people of color out of the community and created neighborhood buying services to monitor the demands and needs of buyers and sellers with the aim of keeping Canarsie a white community. Anti-integration proponents also employed violence to keep Canarsie white, as people of color who bought into the community and white households and white real estate agencies that tried to sell to people of color experienced verbal threats, physical assaults, and firebombings.[87]

White Canarsie's fight for local control over its schooling and housing policies, together with its efforts to keep an integrationist government out of the community, fueled the population's turn rightward and toward the Republican Party. In the 1920s Canarsieans identified as Democrats, Republicans, or socialists, a mix that had consolidated itself into "staunchly Democratic" by the 1950s due to the benefits associated with the New Deal and postwar economic boom.[88] However, in the 1968 presidential election, over 60 percent of the community voted for Richard Nixon, and in 1980 the community voted overwhelmingly for Ronald Reagan.[89] Canarsie was no anomaly: it was reflective of a broader national turn, as many white voters who had supported the Democratic Party since the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal began to vote Republican and vigorously support anti-Black politics when faced with the expansion of civil rights and the New Deal to people of color.[90] In the eyes of these whites, that expansion of the American Dream to people of color was a threat to whites' racialized class status. In short, they viewed equal opportunity as a zero-sum game: Black gains could come only at the expense of whites.

This shift in voting patterns is significant because it indicates how hierarchies and divisions built on ethnic differences were being replaced by or deemphasized in favor of hierarchies and divisions based principally on racial differences—a transformation attributable to the consolidation of whiteness that occurred during the pre- and postwar periods, when people of Jewish, Irish, Southern European, Eastern European, and Northern European descent became white alongside traditional Anglo-Saxon Protestants.[91] In Canarsie, this transformation of whiteness created conditions for Italians and Jews to work side by side to protect their class status as for whites only, even though

previously these two white ethnic groups had weak social ties and were often at opposite ends of the political spectrum.

White Canarsie's pursuit of ethnic succession as a form of opportunity hoarding was not the only possible future for eastern Brooklyn.[92] UCC fought during the 1960s and 1970s for a world where civil rights and equal opportunity existed for all.[93] The organization emerged in East New York during the 1950s to provide programs, activities, and services to white and Jewish youths living in newly created public housing. UCC did not limit itself to service provision, as it rooted its organizational mission in "develop[ing] class conscious community activism committed to racial integration," a stance that lead to the organization being denied the use of public housing facilities in 1961.[94] This integrationist politics rejected the dominant racial logics of both pluralism (in which separate racial groups maintain their differences) and assimilation (in which subordinate groups become like the dominant group) in favor of what UCC called interculturalism and put forth the concept of integration as "a process of struggle, the living experience of dealing with the crucial conflicts of our world together instead of trying to escape them separately. Integration is the recognition of the richness of difference; of the right of different people, with different histories and experience, to influence and change one another during the common struggle to end oppression and war, racism, and exploitation."[95]

By the mid-1960s, UCC's intercultural politics were well known within the New York City activist community, as UCC had had a lot of success organizing block associations, mobilizing against the Vietnam War, and running an interracial summer camp. These results, along with personal connections to government officials, helped it win a War on Poverty grant funded by the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development. This injection of funds enabled UCC to expand its staff, programming, and organizing, particularly at its interracial summer camp, and involved it in the struggle over integrated education. At the time, two youths from UCC's interracial summer camp were attending Franklin K. Lane High School in the City Line area of East New York, which is located in the northeastern section of the community. In the late 1950s the school's students had been predominantly from working-class white families. However, by the 1966–1967 school year, the student population was 80 percent Black and 20 percent white, and the school had segregated entrances, cafeteria tables, sports teams, and clubs.[96] Racial tensions ran high, fights were frequent, white flight intensified, and the militarization of public schooling was put forth as a solution, just as it was in Canarsie. This conflict was mirrored across New York City, as marches, protests, boycotts, and occupations by pro- and anti-integration forces threw the public school system into crisis.[97]

To address this racialized class conflict, UCC worked with other integrationist groups in the 1960s and put forth a proposal for an integrated

educational complex in the southernmost section of East New York, along the Belt Parkway.[98] This effort sought to bring together white Canarsie, Black and Puerto Rican Brownsville, and racially mixed East Flatbush and East New York under one educational space in the hope that it would unite, rather than divide, eastern Brooklyn. Initially presented to the New York City Department of Education in 1963, the plans were eventually rejected in favor of seven segregated and community controlled schools. The failure of UCC's intercultural dream was due in large part to the way City Hall and the political elite of New York City grappled with the conflict over integration. The New York City Department of Education responded to both the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* and the racial tensions in the city's education system in the 1950s and 1960s with over a decade of stall tactics. It was not until 1967—three years after passage of the Civil Rights Act and two years after Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama—that the long-anticipated Bundy Report (named after McGeorge Bundy, president of the Ford Foundation and head of the Mayor's Advisory Panel on the Decentralization of New York City Schools) was released.[99] The report recommended community control and the decentralization of administrative power to neighborhood school districts as the official solution to the problem of integration.[100]

The decentralization plan essentially sought to manage and reduce the struggles over integration that were scaling up to the municipal level by pushing them back down to the level of the neighborhood. Estelle Hertzberg, a Ford Foundation staff member, elucidated this strategy: "In the past ten years, education issues have brought more and more Negro and white parents face to face, in battle dress. Decentralization will, in a manner of speaking, disperse the troops and send them back into their own districts to fight among themselves. This may somewhat reduce the level of Negro-white tension in the city."[101] Ira Katznelson's research on the Washington Heights–Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan during the 1960s and 1970s echoes Hertzberg's claim that decentralization operated to decompose the burgeoning political power of civil rights and Black Power activism and its struggles against white supremacy: "Decentralizing concessions by city elites would be substitutes for other substantive changes, rather than means to redistributive ends. . . . [A] carefully implemented decentralization [plan] could shatter the global challenge that race presented to the urban system and restore the territorial boundaries of regular urban conflict."[102]

The Bundy Report was subjected to serious community debate in Canarsie and East New York but was generally supported by white residents in Canarsie, Black Power organizations in East New York, the Model Cities urban renewal program in East New York, and both the East New York Community Corporation and the East New York Alliance (two antipoverty organizations).[103] UCC was one of the few organizations in East New York that

opposed the Bundy Report and community-control initiatives in general. Given the intercultural and class-conscious politics of UCC, the organization's staff members were very critical of the report because it appeared to claim that "there can be no community of interests between Blacks and whites," and with each ethnoracial community "see[ing] their interests as opposed . . . community level control of the schools would turn district against district in a competition for advantage."[104] Reinforcing barriers to interracial solidarity was counterproductive in the eyes of UCC because doing so would divert "attention from the shared need for additional resources obtainable only through the coordinated mobilization of communities throughout the city."[105] The problem of the systemic underfunding of public education was foremost in the minds of UCC staff members, and they asserted that it would not be corrected through the Board of Education's decentralization plans.

However, rather than decomposing the struggles over public education in the city, the Bundy Report's emphasis on decentralization amplified racial, ethnic, and class conflict in eastern Brooklyn and led to the infamous Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike of 1968, which pitted individual teachers, the United Federation of Teachers, the Board of Education, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school board, and residents against each along ethnoracial lines: white and Jewish versus Black and Caribbean American. While the conflict originated in eastern Brooklyn, the United Federation of Teachers called for a citywide strike in response to the local school board's creation of an all-Black administration as well as its attempt to transfer out of its district thirteen teachers, five assistant principals, and one principal—all of whom were white. The strike, which shut down the entire public school system for nearly a month, ended the Board of Education's short-lived community-controlled schooling experiment in which residents and community leaders had significant power over the curriculum, finances, and personnel of school districts. The outcome was a return to the status quo, with many white families either moving their children out of public education and into private schools (secular or religious) or moving to the suburbs. This disinvestment in urban public education by white families was mirrored at the municipal level with the continued underfunding of public education for people of color. In the case of East New York, no new schools were built in the community between 1965 and 1975, and the Board of Education fought community demands for new construction, despite such massive overcrowding that there were mandatory half-days for over five thousand students so that everyone could receive some education.[106] The lack of seating space was compounded by school buildings that often lacked gymnasiums, science labs, and cafeterias with hot lunches. These educational inequities were not limited to the public K-12 system either, as there was not one "single publicly sponsored day care center" in the community in the late 1960s, and "only one out of twenty prekindergarten-age children [was] being served half a day or

more [of] prekindergarten."[107] The outcome of such an underfunded educational environment was a dropout rate approaching 50 percent and an entire generation of East New York youths who were ill-prepared for good jobs in the emerging postindustrial economy.[108]

The Fiscal Crisis of New York City: Blaming East New York for Reducing Wall Street's Profits

The struggle over integrating and fully funding public education in Brooklyn underscores the fact that while the mid-1960s witnessed a shift in public opinion and government support toward the redistribution of wealth to communities of color, this move was short-lived, limited in its goals, and never fully embraced by many white people. Furthermore, by the late 1960s there was a burgeoning movement against these redistributive programs and policies, as well as the ideas of civil rights, integration, and Black Power, on the part of white communities, philanthropic organizations, and government actors. An example of this shift is that UCC's continued support for integration after its peak in popularity produced many problems in securing and maintaining funding from public and private actors for its interracial programs. While UCC had initial success with federal funding from the War on Poverty, even receiving praise and being seen as a model for youth empowerment, this reputation soured over time. In 1969 the Ford Foundation rejected a UCC grant application because it labeled the organization as "militant integrationist."[109]

The drying up of funding for UCC is emblematic of what the 1970s would bring to communities of color as a whole: permanent austerity and the implementation of a scorched-earth politics. In New York City, this occurred through the 1975 fiscal crisis when Wall Street engaged in a capital strike and refused to provide any more loans to the city to fund its budget until City Hall pursued a political and economic program that was friendly to business.[110] The central tenets of this new program, now known as neoliberalism, were lower tax rates, deregulation, deunionization, the retrenchment of union salaries and pensions, and cuts in the provision of, or the privatization of, municipal services (education, parks, transit, and waste removal) as well as social services (housing, health care, and welfare).[111] Wall Street eventually got its way through the removal of the New York City budget from democratic channels and the placing of all power over city expenditures and labor contracts in the hands of the governor, the mayor, the state comptroller, the city comptroller, and three Wall Street bankers.

Wall Street was also able to control the public narrative surrounding the fiscal crisis and placed the blame for it solely on the excessive power of unionized public employees, a culture of poverty within communities of color, and the misplaced generosity of liberal politicians for the poor through lavish welfare

state programs.[112] Consequently, the negative effects of the fiscal crisis were not equally distributed throughout the city but targeted at communities of color, those most in need of public and social services because of their social, economic, and political marginalization.[113] At the heart of this austerity plan was a policy called planned shrinkage, which advocated for the withdrawal of city services and investment from blighted areas to incentivize the flight of people of color out of the city.[114] Roger Starr, the city's housing commissioner, clearly articulated the logic behind such a policy: "[We must] stop the Puerto Ricans and rural Blacks from living in the city. [We must] reverse the role of the city. . . . It can no longer be the place of opportunity. . . . Our urban system is based on the theory of taking the peasant and turning him into an industrial worker. Now there are no industrial jobs. Why not keep him a peasant?"[115]

The negatives effects of planned shrinkage were clearly apparent in East New York. By the 1970s, "less than one-third of the housing stock was viable," and "4,500 units in existing buildings" were vacant.[116] The city's solution to these abandoned and uninhabitable buildings was to bulldoze entire blocks into rubble, with no plans for their redevelopment. Such efforts turned one-sixth of the land in East New York into vacant lots, half of which were owned by the city, and exacerbated the already overcrowded and unaffordable housing conditions for residents.[117] In addition to housing, almost all municipal services were affected. Trash pickup was supposed to be six days a week, but that was cut to two days a week in the southern sections of East New York and three days in the northern sections.[118] These cuts, combined with endless vacant lots, meant that East New York turned into one big dump as garbage and illegal industrial waste piled up everywhere. Bus routes were cut, the number of buses on each route was reduced, and 4,500 transit jobs were eliminated across the city, which made it even more difficult to get from East New York to jobs in downtown Brooklyn or Manhattan.[119] Cops were let go and fire departments closed in working-class communities. The slow response time by overstretched fire departments amplified the difficulties of combating arson that plagued redlined communities, since it was much cheaper and easier for owners to burn down their buildings and collect the insurance money than to maintain them for residents.[120]

One of the most devastating effects of the fiscal crisis was its disinvestment in the youths of East New York. Two hundred teachers and 50 percent of the guidance staff in the school district were laid off, which contributed to larger class sizes and less support for students, as well as compounding the existing problems of a public school system stretched to the breaking point due to overcrowded classes, chronic understaffing, and deferred maintenance.[121] There was a 50 percent reduction in the parks department workforce, too.[122] This cut, combined with the cuts in trash collection, meant that parks became unusable for residents as they became dumping grounds for garbage. East New York had

had a limited youth infrastructure before the fiscal crisis, with little in the way of parks, community centers, libraries, after-school programs, swimming pools, gyms, and bowling alleys, so these cuts to education and parks were quite destructive.[123]

The fiscal crisis also attacked the City University of New York (CUNY) and its historic mission to educate "the children of the whole people."[124] CUNY's 129-year history of free tuition ended in 1976 based on the demands of Wall Street, and Hostos Community College, Medgar Evers College, and York College (in neighboring Jamaica, Queens)—all predominantly institutions of color—were threatened with closure and kept open only through occupations by students and staff, faculty, and community members.[125] Despite these small victories, the imposition of tuition at CUNY placed higher education—and thus the upward mobility attached to a college degree—out of reach for many New Yorkers. In the fall of 1974, right before the fiscal crisis, enrollment at CUNY stood at an all-time high of nearly 250,000 students, while several years later enrollment was around 180,000, a decline of 28 percent.[126] Overall, in East New York planned shrinkage exacerbated the long-term destruction of the built environment; amplified community destabilization; and made it extremely difficult to obtain a good education, find a good job, acquire affordable housing, and create safe public spaces, all of which are interconnected with the food inequities residents experience.

East New York after the Fiscal Crisis: Mass Incarceration and the New Jim Crow

With planned shrinkage as the official strategy to remove people of color from New York City, the elite quickly turned toward "devis[ing] strategies to recreate, market, and manage the image of NY as a brand" and a place where global capital wanted to do business.[127] This rebranding of New York City was based on a logic that linked the economic crisis of the city with its image as a city overridden by crime, poverty, and decay—an image that was scaring off tourists, highly paid workers, investors, and corporations.[128] By 1974, the city had lost nearly seventy corporate headquarters, tens of smaller firms, and tens of thousands of high-end service jobs.[129] The solution put forth by the elite was to market the city as a perfect place for high-end leisure and culture, including fashion, music, theater, and art. Two quintessential examples of the long-term success of these marketing strategies are the continued popularity of the I♥NY logo, which was created in 1977, and the resurgence of the nickname Big Apple for New York City, which had fallen into disuse by the 1960s.[130] This rebranding of the city's image worked in lockstep with the creation of economic policies designed to create a business-friendly environment through tax cuts, corporate subsidies, and luxury development projects. Within such a

neoliberal urban governance strategy, City Hall no longer sought to balance the demands of capital and labor or those of the upper, middle, and working classes.[131] Instead, the desires of the economic elite, highly paid workers, and corporations were prioritized. The result was that the specific class interests of the elite—in particular, Wall Street and real estate firms—became conflated with the general interests of the city as a whole.[132]

Despite the accolades City Hall received for its marketing techniques and the initial economic success of such efforts, there was still a big problem that branding and tax cuts could not address. Transforming the image of the city was only successful until people came to the city and were brought face-to-face with the dark underside of austerity and planned shrinkage, including poverty, homelessness, crime, and a crumbling transportation infrastructure. Planned shrinkage was indeed successful in pushing some people out of the city: by 1980, East New York had witnessed a population decline of over 25,000 people.[133] Yet planned shrinkage was not successful enough in displacing people of color from the city. In fact, it often had the unintended consequence of concentrating poverty in place while further isolating communities from the institutions that provided economic security and upward mobility. This occurred because many residents of working-class communities were the poorest of the poor and had nowhere else to go and no way to get there. East New York in the 1990s was one example of this unintended consequence, as 40 percent of its households had incomes under $10,000 (about $18,000 in 2020 dollars), the community had the second-highest number of welfare recipients in the borough, and 91.4 percent of public-school children received free lunches.[134]

This concentration of poverty created a huge obstacle for a redevelopment strategy that was premised on the creation of New York City as a "bourgeois playground," which is why alongside of planned shrinkage there was the deployment of order maintenance policing and the emergence of mass incarceration as tools of social control, displacement, and revitalization.[135] Order maintenance policing is more colloquially known as broken windows policing, zero tolerance policing, and stop-and-frisk policing. All of these terms refer to a shift in the criminal justice system toward proactive and aggressive policing in working-class communities and of working-class people, as well a focus on so-called quality of life offenses, including graffiti, loitering, public drinking, panhandling, turnstile jumping, prostitution, street vending without a permit, and homelessness.[136] Proponents of this form of policing contend that visible aesthetic signs of disorder lead to more serious crimes that drive away businesses and financial investment. Nuisance activities are therefore reframed as serious and harmful, and those at the bottom of the postindustrial society are turned into "dangerous and threatening people."[137]

Order maintenance policing became a central tactic in the conversion of New York City into a "luxury city" because its ideological framework reduced

complex social, economic, and political problems—issues often rooted in institutional racism, classism, and sexism—to simplistic and unitary "police problems."[138] In the words of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, mass incarceration became the "geographical solution" for racial neoliberalism because it claimed to be able "to solve social problems" merely by "removing people from disordered, deindustrialized milieus and depositing them elsewhere."[139] This was the case in New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with 75 percent of the state's prison population coming from just seven neighborhoods of color in New York City: the Lower East Side, the South Bronx, Harlem, Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and South Jamaica.[140] It is no coincidence that these neighborhoods were the same ones targeted for planned shrinkage in the 1970s and 1980s and for gentrification-style redevelopment projects in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s: these processes are deeply interconnected. In fact, planned shrinkage and mass incarceration are illustrative of how racial neoliberalism's urban governance strategy epitomizes the national rejection of the welfare state and subsequent embrace of the carceral state, which replaced a politics of combating poverty with a politics that penalizes and criminalizes the poor.[141] Instead of investing in programs and policies promoting restorative justice, drug rehabilitation, drug decriminalization, and poverty reduction (e.g., a guaranteed annual income, living-wage jobs, and affordable housing), the carceral state paired broken windows policing with policies that denied formerly incarcerated people the ability to participate in programs that create economic security and upward mobility, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Section 8 housing, and Pell Grants. Such practices operate as the new Jim Crow and continue to confine men of color and their families to the bottom of the racialized class system.[142]

For East New Yorkers, City Hall's shift to the carceral state politics of racial neoliberalism was especially disastrous. In the 1990s, East New York ranked in the top two or three neighborhoods citywide for violent crime, once registering a record 340 homicides in a single year.[143] Nearly 30 percent of men ages 16–35 were arrested during the decade, and in a special federally designated crime control area that constituted 20 percent of East New York's geographic expanse, the arrest rate was closer to 50 percent.[144] The outcome was an entire generation of youths who had been disappeared by the criminal justice system and the continued breakdown of the family and community fabric as people grew up without fathers, uncles, and cousins or with male family members who lacked any clear pathway for gainful employment after incarceration. These inequities were then exacerbated by welfare reform under President Bill Clinton in 1996, which further eviscerated the social safety net for working-class families by pushing single mothers into precarious poverty-level jobs as an alternative to being paid to stay home and raise their children—a move that

has played a role in the dramatic growth in the number of households living on just $2 a day.[145]

The turn toward planned shrinkage and mass incarceration in New York City intensified the long-term processes that had been creating food inequities in East New York for over half a century. With the city bulldozing the community into rubble, there was little economic reason for banks (which had a long history of redlining the community) to loan money to a grocery retailer desiring to open a store in the neighborhood. On the flip side, there was little desire by grocery retailers to open a store in a community that was experiencing a massive collapse in household income and whose infrastructure was being demolished by City Hall with no plans for reconstruction. The fact that the police and the media came to refer to East New York as the "the killing fields" during the 1980s and 1990s, framing it as a no-go zone for people and investment capital, only intensified the underlying economic processes that produced supermarket redlining.[146] The combination of material and symbolic violence wielded against East New York by public and private actors ultimately made it one of the most underserved communities in New York City when it came to grocery stores.[147] In 2007, the Department of City Planning found that the community had a grocery retail potential of 84,144 square feet, nearly triple the community's existing grocery store footage.[148] The few stores that did exist sold overpriced goods of low quality in unsanitary conditions, which led the community to mobilize in protest against the moldy fruit, spoiled meat, unlabeled cans, broken refrigerators, and rat-infested aisles discussed in chapter 1. Janelle "Jin" Nicol Galvez, markets and outreach coordinator of ENYF!, experienced such conditions firsthand: "I used to live in Crown Heights, and when I came here [to East New York] I was really disappointed because I used to get off at the Utica stop, the 4 train, and walk down toward Empire Boulevard, and there were two meat markets, a fish market, and a whole bunch of vegetable stands. I never shopped at a supermarket when I was living there, I had access to all sorts of food. Then I moved here and I had absolutely nothing, no meat, no fish, no vegetables. I just had an Associated [grocery store] that was totally shitty."

Galvez's experience of living in East New York is a direct outcome of public and private disinvestment practices that pushed grocery stores out of the community, prevented new ones from opening up there, and dried up access to capital for those that remained—practices that occurred alongside the entrance of fast-food restaurants and bodegas into the community. As mentioned above, fast-food companies saw urban environments as a growth opportunity starting in the 1960s, and the federal government subsidized the companies movement into those environments under the discourse of Black capitalism. The growth in the number of bodegas across the city as a whole since the 1950s is attributable to the entrepreneurialism of immigrants from the Dominican

Republic, who had experience operating such businesses there.[149] That growth is also a reflection of the smaller start-up and operating costs associated with bodegas compared to grocery stores, factors that have also played a role in the growing presence of Chinese and Caribbean take-out restaurants as well as West Indian greengrocers in East New York. Those greengrocers are some of the few commercial places in the community where residents can obtain culturally appropriate fruit, vegetables, and greens, and they are available at relatively affordable prices. Moreover, as Janelle mentioned above, given that local grocery stores were often "totally shitty," the food choices at grocery stores, bodegas, and fast-food restaurants were becoming increasingly indistinguishable for residents. With nearly 40 percent of households in East New York being carless, residents increasingly frequented bodegas, fast-food chains, take-out eateries, and greengrocers because that is what was geographically accessible to them.[150]

You would be faced with a similar set of choices if you came to a volunteer day at the UCC Youth Farm and went looking for food. You could go ten blocks (seven-tenths of a mile) west down New Lots Avenue to a one-block section of Pennsylvania Avenue and be able to choose among Popeyes, Burger King, Checkers, Wendy's, McDonald's, and Papa John's. On the way to this fast-food mecca, you would have passed about ten bodegas, two Chinese take-out restaurants, three sit-down restaurants (one Spanish, one Caribbean, and one Dominican), a Dunkin' Donuts, and a Junior's Food Outlet (a discount grocery chain). Outside of the ENYF! Saturday farmers market, there is no place to obtain fresh local and affordable produce on this walk. This is the foodscape for most East New Yorkers, and this is what food apartheid looks like. The history discussed in this chapter is how this food apartheid came into being.

Conclusion: From Food Deserts to Food Apartheid

If you had visited East New York in the 2010s, you would have encountered a foodscape very different from that of the Upper East Side in Manhattan or Prospect Heights in Brooklyn, as well as from the one that prevailed in East New York in the 1950s. Compared to more affluent places in New York City today, the community has higher rates of bodegas and fast-food establishments and much lower rates of grocery stores and supermarkets. After experiencing this foodscape, you might have presumed that it reflected the taste of residents—that they want only ultra-processed foods and do not care about fresh produce. However, this foodscape was not created through the accumulation of individual consumer choices but emerged through a long and sordid history in which East New York was turned into an economically and politically marginalized community by the government, the banking and financial industries, and the broader white public.

As people of color moved to New York City from the Caribbean and the southern United States to escape the oppression of colonialism and Jim Crow, they encountered an inhospitable city that confined them to the status of second-class people by refusing to invest in the education, employment, and housing necessary for their economic security and upward mobility. This refusal to invest in communities of color by private and public actors through redlining and urban renewal was compounded by the limited and declining economic prospects facing poor rural migrants in New York City due to deindustrialization. These inequities were connected with and exacerbated by the federal government's funding of suburbia as for whites only; organized resistance in many white communities to the politics of civil rights, Black Power, and the War on Poverty; and the War on Poverty's own attempts to reduce Black poverty through social service, job training, and entrepreneurship programs rather than structural transformation. As if these actions were not enough, New York City's elite worked to prevent the creation of a racially integrated public education system, blamed communities of color for bankrupting the city, and waged a scorched-earth campaign of planned shrinkage and mass incarceration to force people of color out of the Big Apple.

These are the social processes that have produced food apartheid in East New York. There is light at the end of this story, though. Residents did not just sit back and let City Hall destroy their community. Instead, a grassroots movement emerged to reclaim vacant lots and convert them into community gardens and urban farms to provide fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for residents, a tale told in chapter 3.

3

Community Gardens

Spaces of Resistance

Hands and Heart Garden is a half-acre community garden bounded by a sidewalk, roads, and buildings (figure 7). To the south and west are two-story brick row houses that date back to the early 1900s and stand as a testament to the never realized dream of John Pitkin, a Connecticut merchant who sought to turn Dutch farmland into a port rivaling that of Manhattan.[1] To the north are blocks and blocks of Nehemiah housing constructed in the 1990s on land previously made vacant by planned shrinkage (figure 8). Financed through the church-based East Brooklyn Congregations, these two-story dwellings are made of brick with vinyl siding, feature fenced-in front yards with lawns, and are generally home to members of the small middle class in East New York.[2] To the east is New Lots Avenue (figure 9), a commercial thoroughfare populated by a variety of immigrant-run businesses including delis, liquor stores, laundromats, hair parlors, and West Indian greengrocers, as well as evangelical churches operating out of storefronts.

The community garden is a green island in a landscape of concrete and brick that illuminates capitalist booms and busts, City Hall–led divestment, and residents' efforts to rebuild East New York. It is thanks to the ongoing efforts of residents that zucchini is spreading out across the ground, garlic is standing up tall, and okra is reaching toward the sky at Hands and Heart Garden. It is because of residents that there are rows and rows of bush peas, bell peppers, collards, and bok choy. It is due to residents that the land is now able to feed the

FIG. 7 Rows of callaloo, collards, and corn at Hands and Heart Garden. A burned-out and vacant building stands in the far-right corner, while P.S. 190 Sheffield undergoes renovations in the background. In front of the school are apartment buildings and multifamily homes. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

FIG. 8 Behind rows of garlic, callaloo, collards, and swiss chard stand row houses built in the early 1900s (center right) and Nehemiah houses (center left) built during the 1990s as affordable housing. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

community. One of these residents is Suzanne, a Puerto Rican woman in her thirties. She is new to the garden and is just now, in late May, beginning to plant for the season. She wants to grow tomatoes, basil, and cucumbers, but first she needs to remove the three-feet-tall plants that have taken over her bed, which is four feet wide and twenty feet long. As Suzanne and I move through her bed

FIG. 9 Behind rows of tomatoes, corn, collards, and callaloo stands the commercial strip of New Lots Avenue. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

pulling up plant after plant, the pile becomes bigger and bigger, overflowing not one but two wheelbarrows. "If only these plants were edible," I thought, "that would be many a meal right there, and with no actual effort in growing them either." Noticing the piles, Maggie, a veteran gardener from Jamaica, comes over to inspect our work and politely informs us that what we are so carelessly picking and tossing into the wheelbarrows is in fact edible and called lambsquarters. "You just need to sauté it with some garlic, onions, and seasonings," she says, "just like you would with callaloo or any other leafy green." As the other gardeners overhear our conversation, the big haul of weeds immediately turns from future compost into a dinner for all. Eight gardeners, including me, gladly take some home. The bounty is shared throughout the garden, reflecting what lambsquarters is: a gift of the land.

This was not the first time, nor would it be the last time, that an experienced gardener would bestow their agricultural knowledge on beginning gardeners, such as Suzanne and me. This chapter covers a period of two growing seasons at Hands and Heart Garden, a period when I gardened alongside East New Yorkers and learned how community gardens operate as places for the reproduction of ethnoracial identities, agricultural practices, knowledge bases, and economic performances that challenge what Vandana Shiva calls "the monoculture of the mind" and J. K. Gibson-Graham calls "the iceberg economy."[3] In closing, I articulate how and why creating practices, policies, and programs that celebrate and empower the gardeners to reclaim land for East New Yorkers is vital to growing and strengthening a world beyond racial capitalism that is a just and sustainable society for all.

The Gardens of New York City

There is a long and vibrant history of informal agriculture and community gardening in New York City, one that is marked by elites waging an extensive and protracted struggle to prevent and remove such practices from working-class, immigrant, and Black and Caribbean American communities under the guise of progress and growth.[4] These elites and their advocates have particular notions about how land is to be used, by whom, and toward what ends. For them, land is not to be embedded in a moral economy, communally owned, or oriented toward use values. Instead, land is to be capitalistically owned and treated as a speculative investment, which requires not just private ownership of property but also its use for the maximization of wealth in the interests of developers, bankers, investment firms, and real estate entities. Working-class residents are expected to give up their ties to the land, embrace their position as wage laborers, and buy food on the market instead of growing it themselves. What this meant for both formal and informal agriculture in the late 1800s and early 1900s in New York City is that a particular conception of the city emerged that divorced it from food production and agrarian lifeways in general, against the wishes of many of its residents.[5]

The struggle between the livelihood practices of working-class communities and the economic growth orientation of the elite is nowhere clearer than in the contentious development of Central Park.[6] Before Central Park became the world-famous site of greenery it is today, uptown was referred to as a wasteland of bogs, wetlands, and swamps inhabited by free Blacks and Irish and German immigrants.[7] These people raised chickens and pigs, grew vegetables, chopped down trees for lumber and firewood, fished in the Hudson River, gathered slate to sell as cobblestones, and worked as wage laborers, all in an effort to secure subsistence. However, working-class communities whose members blended independent income generation, wage labor, and self-provisioning as a social reproduction strategy were viewed as backward and unseemly and framed as an impediment to the progress of New York City. Their squats, shantytowns, and agricultural and commoning practices were subjected to criminalization and pushed farther and farther out of Manhattan to Brooklyn, Westchester, Staten Island, and New Jersey.

Yet in every place where elites have tried to suppress working-class forms of informal agriculture it has never ceased to exist outright: it has only been halted momentarily. Informal agriculture has always popped up in another location, free to grow again. So with each wave of immigration to the city, food production has bloomed anew as squatters, backyard gardeners, and community gardeners have invested themselves in remaking the soil and landscape of New York, from the ground up. This was the case in East New York during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when a vibrant informal food economy existed

among Italian and German households. In the late 1800s, families kept chickens, ducks, and geese; grew fruit trees and grapevines; and cultivated summer gardens of potatoes, cabbages, and beans.[8] And in the early 1900s the New Lots area—bordered by Pitkin (on the north), Sutter (on the south), Van Sinderen (on the west), and Pennsylvania (on the east) Avenues—was known as the bean quarter due to the predominance of home garden cultivation.[9] These practices had declined by the 1950s, as white ethnic groups became viewed as white, adopted predominant middle- and upper-class norms, and gave up gardening in favor of the status attached to buying processed foods in stores.

Black and Caribbean Americans would change all this in the 1970s, as they began to rejuvenate the landscape, community, and politics of informal agriculture in New York City.[10] Responding to City Hall's planned shrinkage, residents worked tirelessly to reclaim vacant land for urban food production. This sweat equity approach to community development grew and would eventually face opposition from Mayor Edward Koch and Mayor Rudy Giuliani, both of whom sought to sell off city-owned land obtained through tax defaults and foreclosures to private developers for next to nothing.[11] The fact that many of these lots were home to community gardens maintained by residents did not bother Koch and Giuliani: like their forefathers, they felt that these gardens reflected an outdated past, were hindering growth, and did not constitute development.

The outcome of this conflict for the community gardening movement has been a mixture of wins and losses. Some gardens were lost to so-called development by City Hall's actions, but many were saved through the mobilization, agency, and intensity of the movement, as well as the connections it made with a handful of well-connected and well-resourced New Yorkers. Around four hundred gardens were eventually protected through the Green Thumb program of the New York City Parks and Recreation Department, which was created in the 1970s to manage community gardens on city-owned land.[12] An additional fifty-one gardens were protected through the New York Restoration Project while sixty-three gardens were protected by the nonprofit Trust for Public Land.[13] As of 2020, Green Thumb manages over 550 gardens, while the New York Restoration Project, Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust, Bronx Land Trust, and Manhattan Land Trust protect fifty-two, thirty-five, eighteen, and fourteen gardens, respectively.

East New York gardens are a microcosm of this movement. At one moment in the 1990s, over sixty community gardens had emerged from residents' efforts to revitalize their neighborhoods. The struggle to reclaim, rebuild, and defend East New York through community gardening is an ongoing process, with new gardens popping up all the time, inactive gardens being revitalized, and gardens on privately owned land or those affiliated with GreenThumb facing displacement by either market-rate housing or city-led affordable housing projects.[14]

Displacements are threatened because while gardens associated with community land trusts are protected in perpetuity from development, those associated with Green Thumb do not necessarily have permanent tenure. The reason for this is that Green Thumb was originally created by City Hall as a crisis management strategy to deal with vacant land in the short term until people with capital decided to reinvest in urban development.[15] Community gardeners whose gardens are temporarily protected from development by Green Thumb must remain vigilant in asserting their right to land in a city where vacant land is scare, land values are high, the need for affordable housing is great, and Wall Street and real estate run the show.

Hands and Heart Garden is one of the gardens that emerged from this bottom-up mobilization for community spaces and informal agriculture in New York City. Started in 2006 and opened to the community in 2007, it sits on land that was owned by the New York City Housing and Preservation Department (HPD).[16] A multistory apartment building once occupied the space, but it was torn down decades ago, and the HPD sat on the lot with no plans to turn it back into housing, as it has done with countless other properties throughout the city. Left to itself, the land became a weed-covered lot that was hiding years of illegal dumping, from household garbage and car parts to needles and construction debris. Eventually, the HPD came up with some tentative plans to turn the area into open space. This occurred around the same time that the community began to organize and petition the city to convert the lot into a park to address the lack of green space in the community. The problem with the demands of residents was that the Parks Department was not extremely interested in turning the lot into a park. The meetings between different stakeholders—including residents, the HPD, and the Parks Department—were fruitful, though, and a community garden was put forth as a compromise solution. This proposal played to the strengths of the community's vibrant gardening movement and significantly reduced up-front and long-term management costs for the Parks Department. Today, the garden is part of the Green Thumb program, has over thirty members, is affiliated with ENYF!, and is home to ENYF!'s Wednesday farmers market. Additionally, the garden is a bit atypical of community gardens in New York City, as it is explicitly organized around growing food not just for consumption by gardeners but also for sale at farmers markets.[17]

The Desire to Grow Food: Maintaining Cultural Roots in the Big Apple

To understand why some East New Yorkers refuse to subsist on the ultra-processed foods available in the local stores, invest so much time and labor in cultivating the soil and growing food, and join a community garden where they

are expected to grow food for the community, it is important to know and appreciate who they are, where they come from, and what they brought with them to New York City. Many East New Yorkers are domestic migrants from the South or immigrants from the Caribbean: they hail from Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas as well as Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Barbados. Despite their different geographical trajectories to East New York, they all share a history of growing up on farms or coming from families that are only a generation or so removed from agriculture. Subsequently, many residents express the desire to reproduce familial, cultural, and ethnoracial identities through urban food production. One of these gardeners is Andre, who is Guyanese. He told me: "I grew up on a farm, the baby of twelve. My dad was a farmer, but the town we lived by was built around bauxite mining so there was not much farming out there. There was big money at the mine, high wages, engineers, people with education. My dad had acres, acres, and acres of pumpkins and corn, and he got a contract with the government and grew food for the mines. That is when he got some big cheese [wealth], and we all worked the farm." Andre continues this farming tradition in East New York, where he is known for his gigantic pumpkins. Deborah Greig, the agriculture director of ENYF!, who is white, gave me some insight into pumpkin growing: "Pumpkins are an easy way to generate a couple hundred bucks. Just plant them in the summer and let them grow and then harvest in the fall. They sell for a dollar a pound, and if each pumpkin is around thirty pounds and you have ten to fifteen pumpkins, that is at least three hundred dollars."

Despite the positive work-reward relationship of growing pumpkins, Andre is not altogether satisfied: "I sell at the share table at the market—squash, cucumber, you know—but it is not great. I want more land so I can sell and make some money. There is so much land around. I want to talk to them [ENYF!] about growing more, commercially."[18] His relationship to the wage-labor market is fairly precarious, dependent primarily on informal construction work that is intermittent, not well paid, and without benefits. Growing food for Andre therefore holds out the hope of simultaneously maintaining his cultural roots and family traditions, using the agricultural knowledge he has acquired over the years, and generating an independent income that he can pair with his informal construction work. However, his desires have been blocked by private owners and city agencies that are holding onto nearly 180 acres of vacant land in East New York (over 5 percent of the land in the community).[19] Rather than provide vacant lots at no or low cost to immigrant farmers as a form of community-based economic development, these actors are waiting patiently until more lucrative projects such as shopping centers, office buildings, and housing developments emerge.

Isiah, who emigrated from Nigeria, is in a similar position to Andre's. He wants to scale up food production through acquiring more land:

> I love farming, but I do not have enough land. Here, I work for the city. I went to school for two years to get the job. Education is important. I do medical eligibility now—you got to feed the family. But I would love to get some land upstate and farm. If I had a farm I could get a big table here at the [farmers] market. Back home my grandfather was a typical farmer, tree fruits, coconuts, mangos, guavas, and oranges. My father was a trader and made shoes. I would like to farm. I like to do hands-on work.

The stories of Andre and Isiah reflect the major demand among gardeners in East New York for access to more land so that they can continue the cultural and familial practice of growing food as well as having agriculture be their primary source of income, or at least a sizable secondary income.

Another reason why agriculture remains a vibrant part of residents' lives is that East New Yorkers are transnational gardeners. For many Caribbean gardeners, immigration to the United States has meant not a severing of ties to their ancestral lands but rather their ongoing reproduction, as the immigrants still have familial land in their mother countries, maintain these lands, and plan on returning to them once they are retired. Betty is one of these gardeners. After returning from visiting friends and family members in Jamaica she remarked: "I love gardening. I was planting in Jamaica, beans and callaloo, because they will grow and the neighbors can pick them. Only a short time until I get to do that all the time, three years from now. I want to get a piece of land with water and electricity so I can grow a lot, rows and rows, and then after a long day I can stay overnight." She was talking about a piece of land not connected to her primary residence. Historically, this was a common practice in the Caribbean, with enslaved people working on the plantation for their owners but also working their own provisioning plots much farther inland and upland.[20] This practice continues to this day, with people having a main residence in town as well as a piece of land in the country where they farm—just like Betty wants to do.

Other gardeners, such as Charmaine, grow food at Hands and Heart Garden because of how migration disrupted their traditional foodways. Originally from Jamaica, Charmaine never bought food back home because her dad, a butcher, also had a farm and grew everything on it for the family. In fact, he grew so much that he gave away the surplus to neighbors rather than selling it at the market because, in Charmaine's words, "It was not a job, it was not for income," it was more a way of life. After she arrived in New York, the structured hierarchies of race, class, and gender pushed her and tens of thousands of other Caribbean women into the paid labor of child and home care.[21] Right now, she is a home care aide who works long hours for little money. She lives in an apartment without access to land, which led to her using store-bought food. That practice increased her consumption of ultra-processed foods as well as her

food bill. Her ability to obtain several plots at Hands and Heart Garden and grow plants from seeds she brought back from trips to Jamaica has been important to her because it has kept her food costs down, increased the quality of the food she eats, ensured that her diet is culturally appropriate, and brought in some side income through selling produce at ENYF!'s Saturday farmers market.

Being divorced from her traditional food habits and the economic costs associated with store-bought food were not the only factors pushing Charmaine toward joining Hands and Heart Garden. In the hustle and bustle of New York City, growing food is an activity that grounds her in the soil, with its slower temporality. She can spend hours in the garden on the weekend hanging out with the other gardeners, tending to her plants, and enjoying being outdoors on her own time, all of which reenergizes her and brings her happiness. In the garden she can forget her cares and worries for a little while and enter another world not dominated by the incessant demands of the profit motive, competition, and the clock. "Rain, sleet, snow, sun, you have to work. You got to kill yourself to work," Charmaine lamented. "I am going back to Jamaica when I retire. Going to relax and live off of social security. I can get it mailed to me there."

Many other gardeners from the Caribbean speak negatively about the pace of life in New York City compared to that in their homelands. Olivia, from Grenada, is one of these discontented gardeners. A recent immigrant, she was having trouble finding a job and permanent housing but had become involved in gardening because she wanted to keep in touch with the land. I caught up with her on a volunteer day at the garden, only to find out she was calling it quits and going back home. "I am leaving, going back to Grenada in two weeks," Olivia said in frustration. "I'm tired of this. I want to go back to enjoy the simple life and grow food year-round." I nodded in acknowledgment and curiously inquired, "Year-round food?" Olivia replied, "Oh yes! In the Caribbean you can grow pumpkins, onions, potatoes, squash, melon—something is always growing. My parents have land and my grandparents have undivided land that I will grow on." Olivia then elaborated on the beliefs pushing her from New York and pulling her back to her homeland: "It is all about big and bigger and bigger [here]. I want the simple life, to grow food, to have family and friends, to share what you have. I grew up on the land growing food and never strayed too far from it, so it is easy to go back. And once you go back you do not miss anything because you value different things. You grow food, play games, enjoy family, keep busy—there is plenty to do on the farm." The experiences of Charmaine and Olivia speak to their displeasure with a 24/7 capitalist work culture and their preference for an everyday life that is not fully subsumed by capitalist time discipline—one that values family, friends, culture, food, and slowness rather than wage labor, profits, bigness, and the fast life.

Beyond playing a role in supporting ways of life that were destabilized by capitalism and migration, community gardens can be a place where residents are able to restore identities that were erased by the assimilationist-oriented politics of the United States. This was the case for Janelle Nicol Galvez, ENYF!'s markets and outreach coordinator, who was introduced in chapter 2 and who is Jamaican and Dominican:

> It [working at ENYF!] keeps me close to my own roots. Growing up I was very close to the Jamaican side. I had my uncles, my mom, and my grandmother always telling me about Jamaica, teaching me about the food and different traditions. But I was in Florida for a while and came back to Brooklyn completely Americanized, no salt and no pepa [pepper]. It was by coming to East New York that I started rediscovering things that I missed, talking to other gardeners who are Jamaican. Reconnecting with them was important. Learning more about where callaloo comes from and why they eat it—all that kind of stuff was good for me and helped me understand why my mom was making callaloo. Gardening is important for me now, and it is also important for the people in the community that lived in Jamaica and felt the same way that I did, bland, since they had lost who they were and they did not have anywhere to connect. Then they come here [ENYF!] and it feels like they are home, it feels like they are not missing anything, it is all right there for them.

Janelle's story builds on the previous narratives of gardeners and emphasizes that gardening is a practice that is integral to residents' efforts to resist the pressure to assimilate to whiteness and Big Food. In growing culturally appropriate foods, sharing stories of their experiences growing and eating these foods, and building community through food, residents are asserting their Blackness, their Caribbeanness. In doing so they continue a longtime practice of African, Black, and Afro-Caribbean people in the United States who use food to contest and transform race, class, and gender relations and the inequities shaping them.[22]

The Mother and the Child: Framing Ecosocial Relations

For East New Yorkers, gardening is a form of resistance to the demands to assimilate, culturally and economically, to the racial, ethnic, and class hierarchies of the United States, but it is also a form of resistance to the ecological and physiological harm generated by Big Ag and Big Food. A common topic of conversation among gardeners is how society is going too far in separating people from and dominating nature. Such a conversation occurred at one of ENYF!'s monthly meetings when Mya, a Puerto Rican community food organizer for ENYF!, spoke about how she understood the problem of environmental

destruction: "If you do not take care of the earth, the earth cannot take care of you. The dirt no longer smells good, tastes good. It is no longer sweet. Everything is taken from the mother, the mother is depleted, nothing is left for the child. You need to feed the soil if you want the soil to feed you. You need to feed the mother if you want to feed the child."

Mya's story of the mother (earth) and the child (people) speaks directly to the gardeners' ecofeminist critique of industrial agriculture for its degradation of the soil, its exploitative relationship with ecosystems, and its devastation of the planet.[23] Her employment of a gendered discourse embracing an ethic of care and the values of interdependency and reciprocity is particularly significant, for they have been marginalized in a world organized by "the monoculture of the mind."[24] The foundation of the monoculture of the mind is the wedding of the capitalist logic of economic growth with Newtonian science and Enlightenment conceptions of human domination over nature, a merger that produces a paradigm of thought premised on the framing of nature as an inanimate object separate from humanity that exists solely for the pursuit of profit. Consequently, insects, fungi, bacteria, soil, plants, animals, and minerals register as being of worth only "based upon what value they will provide for the cash-export market," because nature is seen exclusively "from the point of view of raw material and maximizing the value of that raw material."[25]

The hegemony of the monoculture of the mind is central to understanding industrial agriculture's eradication of social, economic, and ecological differences. Through this lens, a plant is understood not as an ecological being within an ecosystem but as an abstract economic form. Rather than perceiving a plant as an actor within a relationship that takes in carbon and pumps out oxygen; binds soil together; fixes nitrogen in the soil; prevents soil erosion; provides habitat and fodder for animals and food, shelter, and fuel for people, all that the monoculture of the mind sees as it looks out over the landscape is the potential for $3.25 per bushel of corn.[26] The plant is abstracted from its many actions and its broader ecological, economic, and social relations, and it is turned into a mere dollar amount. In focusing purely on commercial value, the monoculture of the mind turns a diverse, complex, interdependent, and coproductive landscape with a multiplicity of beneficial processes into a simplified landscape for a one-way extraction economy that continually mines the earth for profit and in so doing destabilizes ecosystems, degrades soil fertility, decreases biological diversity, and pollutes living beings.[27]

Despite the popularity of the monoculture of the mind, gardeners in East New York reject it and contend that if you want healthy people, you need to be a good steward of the planet. This critique is not merely ideological or limited to discussions in group meetings: it is rooted in gardeners' agricultural relations as they use the power and productivity of plants and ecological processes to improve plant output as well as the health of the soil. Eschewing

monoculture-oriented inputs based on fossil fuel, gardeners incorporate compost, crop covers, crop rotations, and biological pest controls into their growing practices, all of which are increasingly common among advocates of agroecology and regenerative farming.[28] In other words, the gardeners feed the soil so the soil can feed them. Through these actions, East New Yorkers are seeking, in their own way, to repair the metabolic rift of industrial agriculture that has toxified and destabilized the planet by replacing ecological processes and principles with petrochemicals and one-dimensional thinking.[29]

In addition to cover cropping, crop rotations, and the use of compost as fertilizer, another practice of gardeners that strikes at the very heart of the monoculture of the mind is their embrace of polyculture and its rejection of the division of plants into cash crops (good plants that generate profit) and weeds (bad plants that harm the development of cash crops). Instead of dividing the world into cash crops and weeds, gardeners either cultivate so-called weeds or use them within strategies of succession planting and companion planting that couple cultivated and uncultivated plants.[30] Such practices are embraced by gardeners because they do not see the world as a zero-sum game in which the survival of one (the cash crop) is dependent on the destruction of the other (the weed). Nigel, a Jamaican gardener at Hands and Heart Garden, is one of these gardeners. I encountered him one day rooting around in his plot with a big black plastic bag. He was moving between his peppers, cucumbers, and kale to grab hold of a short flat plant whose branches were spreading out across the ground. One after the other, these plants were plucked and tossed into the bag. I walked over out of curiosity and asked him if he was weeding. He laughed and said: "No, this is purslane. You can eat it. It is really good for you: it is full of vitamins and minerals and omega-3s. You should try some. You can eat it raw." He broke off a piece and handed it to me. I stared at this succulent-looking plant and took a sniff. A slightly sour smell reached my nostrils, and I bit down on this mysterious green plant. It had a solid crunch to it, and instantly my mouth became full of a subdued lemony flavor. My eyes lit up, and I exclaimed, "Wow, that is amazing!" "See," Nigel responded, and suggested that I use it in salads or as a side dish instead of leafy greens.

The growing practices of Kevin and Omar, both Jamaican, also illustrate this way of growing food. I encountered them in a common area of the garden that serves as a dumping ground for wood chips, compost, and dead plants. They were bending over and inspecting the tiny leaves of plants that were a mere four to six inches tall. I walked over and asked, "How is it going?" Kevin stated: "Good!. We are picking the best volunteers to replant in our garden beds and backyard gardens." He went on to explain that the plant they were picking is called callaloo, a staple food in the Caribbean that has West African roots. In Jamaica, the plant is generally steamed or simmered down to a stew-like consistency and served as a side dish with oxtail, chicken, or goat, but it can also

serve as the base for soups, stews, and smoothies.[31] After gently picking out their favorites, Kevin and Omar returned to their plots and began transplanting the young callaloo back into the soil alongside their other plants. This will not be a one-time occurrence for the pair. Given the short life cycle of callaloo, which produces edible leaves in three weeks and seeds in eight to ten weeks, there are always volunteers to be replanted in community garden beds. In fact, it grows uncultivated throughout many of the vacant lots in the community, and for those who enjoy callaloo, it provides a perpetual feast. The practices of picking volunteer plants and letting callaloo sow itself are significant, for they not only blur the boundaries between cultivated and uncultivated but also underscore the coupling of biological diversity and cultural diversity that happens in the garden. The reproduction of callaloo is integral to reproducing the cultural and ethnoracial identities of Kevin and Omar, for their Jamaicanness and Caribbeanness are connected to their cultivation and consumption of the plant.

If we add to these two examples of polyculture (purslane and callaloo) the experience with lambsquarters from the beginning of the chapter, we have three people-plant relations that exemplify the gardeners' rejection of the monoculture of the mind. In all three, gardeners are engaging in ecosocial relations that do not prioritize the economic value of a cash crop over other plants—a practice that is in sharp contrast to that of industrial growers who frame lambsquarters (a chenopod) and callaloo (an amaranth) as weeds that must be killed by petrochemicals because they compete for land, water, nutrients, and sunlight with the cash crops of corn, soybeans, and sugar beets.[32] Moreover, an investigation of the history of these plants and the foodways that use them makes it apparent that the gardeners of East New York are continuing a fertile tradition, one in which chenopods, amaranths, and purslane have been staple foods for Indigenous peoples, subsistence communities, peasants, and small farmers for millennia. This history includes lambsquarters as the foundation of Indigenous food systems on Turtle Island [what European settlers have renamed North America], amaranth as the core of both the Incan and Aztec food systems, and purslane as a staple of Mediterranean diets since antiquity.[33]

The polyculture of cultivated and uncultivated systems has long been embraced by communities throughout the world because it is vital to minimizing workloads, achieving food security, maintaining biodiversity, and strengthening the health and productivity of the soil. This is the same in East New York. All three plants prevent soil erosion, reduce water evaporation in the soil, and sink nitrogen in the ground. Additionally, through allowing these plants to grow, gardeners are able to reduce the demands on their labor because they do not have to weed these plants (or the other plants that might take their place) from their plots. This is an important benefit, since the gardeners eschew toxic herbicides, whose use is industrial agriculture's quick labor-saving solution to its manufactured weed problem. For all these reasons, incorporating

polycultural practices and uncultivated plants into their growing practices is central to the efforts of gardeners to engage in an agriculture that is holistic, regenerative, and ecologically grounded.

The gardeners eat what they grow. Therefore, they are incorporating these so-called weeds not merely into their agricultural practices but also into their diets, which is physiologically, economically, and politically significant. While gardeners turned vacant lots into gardens for cultural and economic purposes, this activity was precipitated by the low-quality produce found in local grocery stores and the burgeoning food-based health inequities that afflicted residents. Beverly, a woman from Barbados who began gardening in the late 1990s, spoke about why growing her own food became so important to her:

> East New York is one of the lower-income sections of New York State, with high rates of diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure—and all those have to do with food. That was one of the reasons for getting involved, helping the community to enhance their health. Look at how many fast-food places are in walking distance, places like McDonald's, Checkers, Burger King, and White Castle. Even go to the supermarkets like the Western Beef over there [pointing down the street to the Junior's Food Outlet], and you see what people are putting in their shopping carts. They have got six boxes of noodles and eight boxes of doughnuts, and you have a bunch of fast food and macaroni and cheese, which I love and all that. But there is not an onion, an apple, or a garlic in that shopping cart, and you will see it ring up and there is nothing there but starch, which makes you wonder about high blood pressure and diabetes and things like that.

There is a simple reason why "there is not an onion, an apple, or a garlic" in the shopping carts at the Junior's Food Outlet: like many of the other discount grocery stores in East New York, it has a very limited, and often subpar, produce section, since it stocks mostly processed and canned foods.[34] This inequitable situation pushed Beverly to grow whole food that she could not find in the local grocery stores, from tomatoes, figs, and eggplants to bell peppers, pumpkins, and squash. She then began to sell such produce informally to passersby as well as formally at ENYF!'s Saturday farmers market. Beyond these fruits and vegetables, Beverly also decided to grow a lot of plants that were "really medicinal," to use her words, and intended to assist her in combating colds, relieving chronic pain, and managing her overall health. These plants include hyssop, anise, mint, lemon balm, lemon grass, basil, St. John's wart, lavender, dandelion, and stinging nettle.

Reflecting on these conversations and experiences with gardeners, we can begin to piece together a picture in which the thoughts and actions of gardeners highlight the fact that a polycultural approach to food production has a vital

role to play in combating the food-based health inequities that are negatively affecting East New York residents. While gardeners would acknowledge that the community is indeed underserved by grocery stores and that the produce found in the stores is of low quality, they do not necessarily feel that merely increasing the number of grocery stores will address the food inequities in the community. This is because the monoculture in the grocery store is connected to the monoculture in the field. The larger problem for residents is that they have not had alternatives to Big Ag and Big Food.

To address this injustice, the community gardeners of East New York have engaged in a prefigurative politics that exemplifies the values and practices of an agriculture that nourishes the body and the planet and demonstrates that there is another way to organize people-planet relations beyond the monoculture of the mind.[35] How the gardeners grow food and the types of food they grow are collectively put forth as a solution to the food-based health inequities that affect the community. Take, for instance, the health benefits of lambsquarters, callaloo, and purslane: all three plants are rich in vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and antioxidants.[36] This is why two of lambsquarters's chenopod cousins, quinoa and chia, have become darlings of the health food industry and are touted as "superfoods."[37] It is also the reason why the National Research Council has called amaranth a "poor people's resource" and a "perfect botanical tool for helping the most nutritionally challenged strata of society. Taken all round, they [amaranth] represent a sort of do-it-yourself kit to good nutrition."[38] In addition, purslane has been framed as a nutritional powerhouse that has twice the omega-3 fatty acids as kale, four times the vitamin E as turnip greens, and as much iron as spinach.[39] Additionally, the omega-3s found in purslane not only prevent but also treat "coronary artery disease, hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, other inflammatory and autoimmune disorders, and cancer."[40] In addition to these specific benefits, uncultivated plants tend to have higher vitamin and antioxidant levels than cultivated plants do.[41] Consequently, a diet that incorporates more wild or uncultivated plants is better able to fight disease than a diet based on monoculture crops and ultra-processed foods.[42] The preponderance of lambsquarters, callaloo, and purslane throughout East New York in community gardens, backyard gardens, and vacant lots could form the foundation of such a diet, one whose health benefits would counter the structural violence of diet-related disease that is slowly killing residents.[43]

Distributing the Food Surplus in a Diverse Economy: Beyond Capitalocentrism

So far gardening has been connected to cultural and ethnoracial identities, ecological politics, and health politics. Community gardens are also economic spaces for the production, distribution, and consumption of produce, and

despite the presumption that gardeners are merely hobbyists growing a few cucumbers and a handful of tomatoes, Hands and Heart Garden produces a rich surplus beyond what the gardeners are able to consume. In fact, the distribution of this surplus throughout the community in a variety of forms and the logic shaping this circulation provide another illustration of how the gardeners of East New York reject the monoculture of the mind, embrace polycultural thinking, and use economic diversity as a way to feed the community.

It is a late afternoon in early July, and reggae music filled the garden with deep bass lines, drum taps, and off-beat rhythms. The music emanated across the street from Flo's, a Caribbean take-out restaurant that sells curried chicken, fried chicken, curried goat, and oxtail. In front of the store is a group of four Caribbean men with dreads who are wearing T-shirts, cargo pants, and beanies stripped in red, green, and yellow. They can be found there quite regularly, where they listen to music on a boom box and occasionally play dominos, but generally they just hang out and talk. As a song ended, Sonia called out across the street, "Shawn!," waved for him to come over, and said, "Got some callaloo for you!" Sonia had planted lettuce seedlings a couple of weeks ago, and several rainstorms since then had produced a flourish of vegetative growth in the garden. Unfortunately, volunteer callaloo were much more successful in claiming space, both vertically and horizontally. A retired New York City bus driver who is originally from Barbados, Sonia struggles with arthritis, which pushes her to try to minimize her hand labor in the garden. One way of achieving this is through engaging in barter with Shawn and his three friends, all of whom quickly picked her plot clean of callaloo. As Shawn and the other men left, he said: "Thanks for the food, thanks for the daily bread, thank you for feedin' me, mama. Puttin' clothes on me is one thing, but feedin' me is even betta'—nothin' freer than mama earth." In the end, Sonia had a bed of lettuce seedlings free of callaloo, and the four men had enough leafy greens for a handful of meals. It was an economic exchange in which edible but unwanted plants were not poisoned but converted into food by people who were not community gardeners for themselves and their families.

Economic exchanges such as these, which occur without the pursuit of profit or the exploitation of labor, are the norm, not the outlier, at Hands and Heart Garden. In the case of Beverly, it is something that she has been doing for nearly two decades as a gardener, a span of time marked by the informal giving and selling of her produce to residents:

> I was growing everything, tomatoes, herbs, eggplant, honeydew, and Crenshaw melon. People would come past and ask, "Oh miss, what are those?" And I would say, "Tomatoes, take some, try it." People would come by and ask, "Can I have some cucumbers and give you a couple dollars? I do not mind giving you three dollars because I cannot get this here in the store." And I said, "Sure."

> I was giving bags of stuff away for like three bucks, but what am I going to do with a hundred cucumbers or ten Crenshaw melons? They all ripen at the same time.

Beverly's experience is indicative of the multiplicity of economic practices that constitute the distribution of food from the garden. She grew food for herself, gave some away, and sold some for income within a moral economy, a practice she continues in a more formal manner by selling her surplus garden produce at a rented booth at ENYF!'s Saturday farmers market.

The practice of gifting, as a way to distribute the garden's surplus, is very common among gardeners. On a Sunday afternoon in August, I arrived at Hands and Heart Garden and found the picnic table in the middle of the garden overflowing with callaloo. Nigel and Cynthia, a husband and wife, had harvested almost their entire crop and arranged the produce in numerous bushels that they were transferring into separate bags. I asked, half-jokingly, "Are you eating all that for dinner?" Cynthia said, "Oh no, it is for my coworkers." Nigel chimed in: "We pick a lot for coworkers. We grow too much to sell." And off he went to his vehicle, with a plastic bag full of callaloo on his shoulder. Later that week while I was building raised beds in the garden, Tamara called me over to her plot. "Look, I have two zucchinis," she said, "Last weekend they were like this [holding her hands two inches apart]. Now look at them—they are huge!" I agreed and responded, "Yes they are. Look at mine—they are huge, too. I picked six on Wednesday, seven on Friday, three on Saturday, one on Sunday, and three today. I could pick four more right now if I wanted to. They are big enough, and by this weekend they will be too big. But what can I do with twenty zucchinis in a week?" Nonchalantly she responds, "Give them to a neighbor. When I go home, I give food to the first neighbor I see, if not the one on the corner then across the street, if not there then the next one and so on, and the next week I give to the other person. I make sure everybody gets some. It is the same for my backyard garden. My neighbor comes over and asks, 'Do you have any tomatoes?' and I give him a few."

The wealth of economic relations within the garden, and their embeddedness in building community and feeding people, stands in marked contrast to the conventional depiction of community gardens by the economic and political elite of New York City—a group that often frames gardens as economically marginal, if not outright detrimental, to the growth and development of the city. These actors tell us that gardens do not generate revenue for the municipal budget, occupy land that could be used for commercial development, and that affordable housing takes priority over community gardens on public land. Yet if one spends time in the community gardens of East New York, it becomes clear that they are economic spaces through and through and are valuable for residents. It is just that these practices, and the lifeways that they are

embedded in, are devalued by a City Hall that focuses principally on facilitating the power of capitalist actors and with them economic growth decoupled from just sustainabilities. In this regard, City Hall's vision of the world is capitalocentric—only seeing, thinking, and participating in capitalism—and generates practices, policies, and programs that empower what has been called "the iceberg economy," an economy constituted almost exclusively by "wage labor, market exchange of commodities, and capitalist enterprise."[44]

The concept of the iceberg economy underscores the fact that while capitalist actors and practices generally dominate conversations about the economy, in fact they account for only a small number of the economic actors and practices in the social world and therefore represent merely the part of the iceberg that is visible above the waterline (figure 10). Once people peer below the waterline, they are able to see that the majority of the economy actually exists outside of wage labor, capitalist enterprises, commodity markets, the profit motive, and the mandate for economic growth, just as the bulk of the iceberg lies under the waterline. This economic diversity includes the practices, relations, and organizations that constitute everyday life, from care work to credit unions, self-provisioning to nonprofits, and volunteering to worker cooperatives. When such activities are made visible and seen as existing alongside of capitalist relations, the economic picture shifts from that of the iceberg economy to that of the diverse economy (table 1).[45]

Despite the importance of the diverse economy for reproducing people's daily existence, the hegemony of capitalocentrism means that noncapitalist relations are starved of the discursive, political, and economic support that would strengthen them and enable them to develop as viable alternatives to capitalist relations. For instance, the capitalocentric way of seeing from above makes invisible and devalues the economic practices of gardeners in East New York because the gardeners use practices that are beyond value (they gift), ignore conventional notions of capitalist value (they barter), have work that is not big enough to be considered of value to capitalists (they provision themselves and generate independent income), work through noncapitalist enterprises (nonprofit organizations), and use nonmarket forms of finance (sweat equity and philanthropy).[46]

Highlighting the capitalocentrism of City Hall helps explain why community gardens associated with the Green Thumb program are not always protected in perpetuity like community land trusts but in some cases only until City Hall finds what it considers better uses for the land. It also helps explain why city-owned land is sold off to private developers on the cheap and often left vacant for long periods of time afterward.[47] Both practices operate primarily to reinforce the ideological and material power of capitalism over everyday life by delegitimizing the use of, ownership of, and claim to land that do not prioritize the profits of the banking, finance, and real estate industries.

FIG. 10 Graphical depiction of the iceberg economy. (Illustration created by Community Economies Collective and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.)

Table 1
The Diverse Economy

Labor	Property	Transaction	Enterprise	Finance
Wage	*Private*	*Market*	*Capitalist*	*Mainstream market*
Wage labor	Private property	State-controlled currencies	Limited liability company Exchange-listed company	Private banks Exchange-listed banks Investment banks
Alternative paid	*Alternative private*	*Alternative market*	*Alternative capitalist*	*Alternative market*
In-kind Reciprocal labor Self-employed Work for welfare Co-operative	State-managed State-owned Customary lands Common lands Community land trusts Limited-equity cooperatives	Barter Fair trade Underground market Informal market Alternative currencies Local trading systems State sale of public goods	Green capitalist Type B, socially responsible firm Nonprofit State-owned	Microfinance Community-based financial institutions Credit unions Co-operative banks Socially responsible investing, slow money State banks Government sponsored lenders
Unpaid	*Open access*	*Nonmarket*	*Noncapitalist*	*Nonmarket*
Volunteer Housework Family care Neighborhood work Self-provisioning Slave labor	Open-source intellectual property International waters Atmosphere Ecosystem services	Gifting Indigenous exchange Household transfers State transfers Gleaning, foraging, hunting, fishing Theft, poaching	Worker co-operatives Community-owned enterprise Feudal estate Slave enterprise	Sweat equity Family lending Philanthropy Donations Crowdfunding Interest-free loans

SOURCE: Adapted from Gibson-Graham 2008, 4; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013, 15; Healy 2015, 349; Houtbeckers 2018, 64.

Moreover, in attacking gardens, City Hall is attempting to weaken the power and voice of the community garden movement to contest capitalocentrism by destabilizing and eliminating the spaces and networks that operate as a power that counters City Hall's iceberg economy.[48]

Beyond Gardens: Strengthening an Equity-Oriented Diverse Economy

When we shine a light on the practices of community gardeners, an existing diverse economy appears—one that individuals, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies can strengthen and deepen with supportive practices, policies, and programs. Achieving this goal requires fusing the conceptual framework of the diverse economy with asset-based and equity-oriented principles that approach community development from below rather than from above.[49] The importance of community-based and equity-oriented planning projects that couple asset-based thinking with the diverse economy become all the more significant as gentrification reshapes working-class communities of color and generates worries among long-term residents that the community gardens that they fought so hard for will either be lost to housing developments or remain but become conduits for green gentrification.

The fear of gentrification looms large in East New York today because it is one of fifteen communities that Mayor Bill de Blasio selected in 2014 for his plan to create 200,000 units of affordable housing by 2024, a goal that was increased in 2017 to 300,000 units by 2026.[50] In East New York, de Blasio's plan meant the upzoning of a two-hundred-block section around the Broadway Junction transit hub where East New York, Bushwick, and Bedford-Stuyvesant meet.[51] UCC and ENYF! opposed the upzoning on the ground that it would facilitate gentrification, which had not previously been a problem in the area, and worked with other community organizations through the Coalition for Community Advancement (CCA) to put forth their own community-based redevelopment plan for East New York.[52] The upzoning process became official in 2016, with many modifications to accommodate community demands for increases in affordability, antidisplacement policies, and new community institutions and infrastructure. Even with these changes, the size and scope of the upzoning project has fueled real estate speculation in the community and contributed to escalating rental and home prices.[53]

Not only is the city-led upzoning creating displacement pressures, but David Vigil, youth program director of ENYF!, who identifies as Chicano and white, is worried that the project and City Hall's actions could be detrimental to expanding the community gardening movement in East New York: "A lot has changed in the last couple of years because affordable housing was a much bigger part of Mayor de Blasio's platform than [the platforms of] previous

mayors. This has resulted in community gardens being pitted against affordable housing, which is a little bit of a false dichotomy because if you travel around East New York and Brownsville, you will still find plenty of vacant land. But not all of it is publicly owned, so it is easier for the city to use its own stock of land than it is to try and purchase land to create housing." As a result, the vacant land that East New Yorkers and ENYF! would like to be able to access to grow more food for residents might be blocked by City Hall's attempts to address the city's housing crisis for working- and middle-class households, a crisis fueled by City Hall's history of supporting luxury development over affordable housing.[54]

One way ENYF! has been dealing with this squeeze on vacant city-owned land, as well as the threat of green gentrification, is by expanding community gardens and urban farms at public housing complexes in the community, including the Pink Houses Community Farm. Another way for the community garden movement to address these threats is by revitalizing a politics that focuses on land use planning for the community as a whole, not just garden planning. In the 1970s, community gardening struggles on the Lower East Side led to a vibrant homesteading movement.[55] A similar shift is needed now to challenge de Blasio's solution to unaffordable housing, and such a shift might be happening through the efforts of the CCA. The trajectory and long-term vision of the CCA is unclear, but what is clear from this struggle against de Blasio is that to recognize East New Yorkers' right to the city, the food justice movement will need to push the urban food movement beyond food to causes linking food justice, land justice, and housing justice. That entails advocating on behalf of community-based economic development projects, limited-equity housing cooperatives, and community land trusts for housing, community spaces, and worker-owned businesses.

In New York City, this could mean taking a page from the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in Boston, which has redeveloped a working-class community of color without displacing long-term residents.[56] The DSNI is located a mere two miles from downtown Boston in the Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods, both working-class communities of color.[57] Like East New York, during the 1980s the Dudley Street neighborhood was struggling with poverty, crime, unemployment, and trash-filled vacant lots due to a racialized legacy of divestment tied to redlining, milking, blockbusting, and urban renewal. However, the Dudley Street community was adjacent to downtown, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority proposed a massive revitalization of the Dudley Square area. This was a $750 million project consisting principally of office towers, hotels, and luxury housing. Residents opposed the revitalization project, created the DSNI, formed a community planning committee, and held community-wide meetings to discuss residents' vision

for the neighborhood. The outcome was the Dudley Street Neighborhood Comprehensive Revitalization Plan, which included a village commons of new houses, parks, and shops as well as building renovations, all on land that would be cooperatively owned by and for residents. This vision would be realized by City Hall giving the DSNI the power of eminent domain over the vacant properties and the DSNI creating a community land trust for their collective ownership called Dudley Neighborhood Incorporated.

Since its emergence in 1984, the DSNI has transformed "over half of the 1,300 vacant lots" in the community into "homes, gardens, parks, orchards, playgrounds, schools, community centers and a Town Common."[58] This includes "over 400 new homes built and over 500 housing units rehabbed."[59] Even with all this development, the community's demographics have not changed drastically. However, the residents are more financially secure. This is because the community land trust does not merely enable residents to shape the development of their community, but it also makes that development affordable for long-term residents. It does so by creating a dual ownership structure in which the land is owned by the community via the trust, while the building on the land is owned by individuals. And the individual owners are required to resell the home only to a low- or moderate-income buyer at a price that is limited to half a percent increase per year, capped at 5 percent after a decade.[60] Such structures not only make housing affordable initially but also create permanent affordability for working-class households of color through limiting the economic practices that treat land and housing as speculative investments.[61]

Given the ability of community land trusts to remove speculative pressures from urban real estate markets, it is no surprise that the Food Project, a nationally renowned nonprofit organization in Boston, is located in the Dudley Street neighborhood, where it operates two urban farms (totaling two acres) and the 10,000-square-foot Dudley Greenhouse, which is owned by the DSNI.[62] Both of the urban farms are market oriented, with the food being sold at the Dudley Town Common farmers market and numerous hunger-relief organizations. Half of the greenhouse is market oriented and focused on growing vegetables and herbs for sale to local restaurants. This income supports the other half of the greenhouse, the Community Bay, which consists of twenty-seven raised beds that local residents and groups use to grow produce for themselves. In addition to these two activities, the greenhouse is home to the Food Project's "Grow Well, Eat Well, Be Well" initiative that emerged to address residents' desire for training and workshops to learn how to grow food, celebrate their cultural foodways, and build community power through food.

Overall, through coupling community-based planning with community land trusts, the DSNI has been able to control the redevelopment of its community in a way that benefits working-class residents of color. It has done so

through building to meet social needs, including affordable housing, community space, green space, and food justice. Through such efforts, the DSNI has been able to prevent the pitting of affordable housing against community food systems that has happened in New York City and also been able to resist the redevelopment of its community in a manner that would have displaced existing residents in favor of yuppies. For these reasons, the DSNI holds out hope for redevelopment without gentrification in East New York.

Conclusion: Community Gardens as Bottom-Up Development

Community gardening has a long and vibrant history in New York City, one rooted in immigrant communities, working-class communities, and communities of color. This chapter has built on this history by documenting how the struggles of gardeners in East New York are directly related to alternative ways of organizing social, ecological, and economic relations than those of the monoculture of the mind and capitalocentrism. Culturally, gardening is central to reproducing residents' ethnoracial identities and facilitating their refusal to assimilate to whiteness. Ecologically, the embrace of polyculture and mixing cultivated and uncultivated systems is integral to challenging the cash crop model of industrial agriculture dependent on petrochemicals. Physiologically, gardeners' embrace of whole foods and so-called weeds is vital to combating the structural violence embedded in the diets promoted by Big Ag and Big Food that are killing residents through diet-related disease. Economically, community gardens are vibrant places where the diversity of independent income generation, self-provisioning, bartering, and gifting are embedded in social relations that embrace noncapitalist and nonmarket practices.

Through underscoring these practices, their interrelationship, and their embedding within a polycultural way of thinking and being, the chapter has made visible the fundamental aspects of daily life that are devalued, made invisible, and repressed through the capitalocentrism of City Hall. It has also underscored how community gardens are threatened by gentrification, a threat requiring the community gardening movement to move beyond food; combine land justice, housing justice, and food justice; and place them at the core of urban food politics. Fortunately, this is happening. Asset-based and equity-oriented community development models, like the DSNI, exist and can be used to protect gardens and housing for working-class communities of color in perpetuity. Without such a shift in urban food politics, the community gardens that long-term residents fought so hard for will be taken over by white gentrifiers or replaced outright with new housing (probably also for white gentrifiers).

Unfortunately, securing bottom-up community control over land for agriculture and housing is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for realizing food justice. The food justice movement also needs to push the state to create policies and programs that strengthen the distribution channels of, and increase demand for, food systems oriented toward social justice. Chapter 4 takes up this issue as the book's focus shifts to ENYF!'s farmers markets and the numerous barriers the organization faces in trying to secure East New Yorkers' right to food.

4

Realizing Social Justice at the Farmers Market

The Importance of the State

On most days the street in front of the UCC Youth Farm is occupied by livery cabs and their drivers who smoke cigarettes, take naps, and otherwise pass the time waiting for their next customer. This all changes on Saturdays from June to November, when the street is transformed into a farmers market full of vibrant sights, sounds, and smells. During this six-month period, a short one-block section of Schneck Avenue between New Lots Avenue and Livonia Avenue is barricaded off from automobile traffic, and the road is turned into a pedestrian mall containing sixteen tent-covered stands, a couple of picnic tables, and a large performance stage for ARTS East New York (figures 11 and 12). The market begins promptly at nine, when the market manager turns on the sound system and gets the market energy flowing. As the *reggaetón* beats fill the air, youths dance, gardeners and vendors sing along, and kids flock to the children's table to paint pictures and make crafts. Residents show up by bike, bus, car, wheelchair or on foot. As they move throughout the market, they are greeted by a small rural farmer who tries to entice them to purchase sweet corn ("three for two dollars"), a community gardener who informs them about the health benefits of purslane ("It's got omega-3, lowers blood pressure, and reduces the risk of heart disease."), and another community gardener who asks, "How are you doing this morning? What would you like this morning?" as she shows off her carrots and beets in a rainbow of reds, purples, and oranges.

FIG. 11 ENYF!'s Saturday farmers market on Schneck Avenue, as seen from New Lots Avenue. Signs on the first booth on the left advertise that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and Health Bucks are gladly accepted. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

FIG. 12 ENYF!'s Saturday farmers market looking south towards New Lots Avenue. Residents engage in conversation while shopping for produce. (Photo by Justin Sean Myers.)

The cornucopia of fresh food continues at the UCC Youth Farm table, which is overflowing with bitter melons, tomatillos, and hot peppers of all types—habanero, scotch bonnet, ghost, birdseye, cayenne, and Ho Chi Minh, to name a few. As the youths lay out the produce, interns in their second, third, or fourth year quiz the first-year interns on the produce prices: "How much are hot

peppers? Seim beans? Kerala leaves?" Across the way more youths are busy handling the share table, where gardeners from across the community have dropped their produce off for sale. The table is awash in cucumbers, callaloo, kale, Swiss chard, tomatoes, and bell peppers, as well as the more striking horseradish, taro, and green pumpkins. If you are not in the mood for produce, prepared-food booths sell the Caribbean staples of curried goat, oxtail, beef stew, jerk chicken, and salt fish, as well as sides of plantains, collards, and rice and peas. Once your food is ready, you can sit down at a picnic table, eat your meal, enjoy the music, and get ready for the afternoon's festivities, which range from poetry slams and Caribbean dancing to hot pepper and bitter melon festivals.

On first glance, ENYF!'s Saturday farmers market looks like any other farmers market: people are buying produce, tasting samples, discussing prices, learning how to prepare particular foods, and conversing with friends and neighbors. However, if you visit ENYF!'s market over an entire season and look a little closer at the economic transactions taking place, you become aware of a delicate dance between two different revenue streams, each constituting about half of the market's income. One stream is based in cash, and the other is based in food assistance programs. Delving deeper into this fifty-fifty relationship connects ENYF! to an ongoing debate within the food movement about how to reconcile the tensions at farmers markets between affordability for working-class residents and economic viability for small farmers. Historically, affordability issues are where the rubber meets the road in the food movement, and they have not always gained much traction in the movement. Social justice concerns pushing for affordable local food for all have generally been deemphasized in favor of higher prices, and with them larger economic returns for small farmers.[1] Consequently, the economic models of the food movement have not been very equitable, as they have priced out many working-class communities of color. Some food movement actors have proposed addressing this problem through expanding food assistance programs at farmers markets, while others contend that cultivating a taste for local food in working-class communities is the only way to go. This chapter contributes to this debate through conversations with ENYF! staff members, in which they contend that food assistance programs are vital not only to securing the right to food for working-class communities but also to strengthening community food systems oriented toward social justice. These conversations underscore the fact that achieving these twin goals will require transforming how the public frames food assistance programs as well as the role of the state in meeting people's social needs.

Farmers Markets: Why, Where, How, and for Whom?

Throughout the twentieth century many farmers adhered to the rules of industrial agriculture and government farm policies that stated in no uncertain terms

farmers needed to "get big or get out."[2] Thousands upon thousands of people scaled up their farms to the size of the factory farm, while millions got out of farming altogether. One reason for this restructuring of agriculture is that as power within the food system shifted toward processors, manufacturers, and retailers, the small farmer was squeezed economically and politically.[3] Fifty years ago, farmers in the United States received 45–60 percent of the money consumers spent on food.[4] In 2018, farmers received only 14.2 cents for every dollar spent on food, one of the lowest figures ever recorded by the United States Department of Agriculture.[5] Overall, more and more of the money spent on food goes to actors further up the food chain and farther away from the farm. Small farmers have also had difficulty finding outlets among food processors, distributors, and retailers because their produce is considered too diverse, too limited in quantity, or too ugly to fit the volume and cosmetic standards of grocery retailers.[6] In addition to these economic barriers, the Farm Bill and the agricultural lobby in the United States have long been controlled by Big Ag, Big Food, and national corporate farming associations, which have shifted federal agriculture policies to favor monoculture factory farming and a small number of crops.[7]

Denied access to conventional economic markets, as well as a voice at state and federal food policy tables, small farmers turned to farmers markets as both an outlet for their produce and a way to capture a larger percentage of the food dollar. This turn coincided with a growing desire by consumers for fresh, healthy, and chemical-free produce, as well as for a more environmentally sustainable food system; and a yearning to reconnect with those who actually grow their food. Thus, although farmers markets were on the decline during the first half of the twentieth century, they began to reappear in significant numbers in the 1970s and have increased dramatically since then. From a scant 1,755 in 1994, the first year numbers of the markets were calculated, farmers markets had doubled by 2004, tripled by 2009, quadrupled by 2011, and nearly quintupled (to 8,771) in 2019.[8] Within New York State, the number of farmers markets has more than doubled since 2000, increasing from 235 to nearly 700 in 2019.[9]

This dramatic growth has subsequently led to farmers markets being positioned by boosters as an alternative to the supermarket and the industrial food system in general.[10] Socially, farmers markets create face-to-face interactions that reinvigorate a sense of community and the ties that bind in an atomized consumer society. Economically, the markets help smaller diversified farmers capture the entire food dollar and thereby become financially viable through circumventing the middle actors who would generally process, distribute, and retail food. Politically, the markets revitalize an independent agrarian middle class and with it place-based democracy at the town-hall level. Ecologically, the markets support smaller biodiverse farms that enhance ecosystem sustainability and resiliency by rejecting fossil fuel and chemical inputs

in favor of agroecology and regenerative agriculture. Physiologically, the markets reduce rates of diet-related disease because the whole foods sold there are higher in vitamins and minerals and lower in the salts, sugars, and saturated fats found in ultra-processed foods.

Despite the apparent interests shared by farmers and consumers, as well as the claim that farmers markets can provide a win-win situation for both, in practice the existence of farmers markets has been driven by the farmer's bottom line. According to Mark Winne, former executive director of the Hartford Food System and a longtime member of the Community Food Security Coalition: "Many markets were started, many failed, and many new ones emerged to take their place. But in all cases, the essential determinant of success was what worked best for the farmers—where they could make the most money and encounter the fewest hassles. . . . Ultimately, if the farmers made money they would come. No money, no farmers. No farmers, no market."[11] Unfortunately, Winne's experience in Hartford, Connecticut, reflects national trends.[12] This problem is seen in the San Francisco Bay Area, where farmers markets in Berkeley (a community with a largely affluent and white population) are booming, while farmers markets in West Oakland (most of whose residents are poor and Black) have a hard time keeping farmers.[13] The foot traffic and purchasing power in West Oakland are limited, so farmers either never come to markets there or leave them for more lucrative markets where residents can vote with their forks. ENYF!'s farmers markets are not immune to this issue, as new farmers have come for the first couple of weeks in June only to leave in favor of other farmers markets whose economic prospects are more robust—such as those in Park Slope, Prospect Heights, or Fort Greene. These neighborhoods in Brooklyn not only have more customers at their farmers markets than those of ENYF!, but they also have customers who can afford to pay higher prices. For example, hot pepper prices at the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket are two to three times higher than those at ENYF!'s market.

Some of the problems with farmers markets in working-class communities are logistical problems endemic to all farmers markets: they have limited hours and locations, are dependent on weather, and must confront consumer beliefs that local produce is too expensive. Other problems are rooted in a food movement that ignores the racial, class, and gender inequities shaping food choices and asserts that everyone can and should pay more for food. Alison Hope Alkon's study of farmers markets in Berkeley and Oakland attests to this perspective:

> Affordability is a somewhat contentious topic at the North Berkeley Farmers Market, as I learned when I told a white, male vendor that six dollars for half a dozen eggs was beyond my price range. "People don't like to pay," he responded angrily, "but at Safeway, you pay later. You pay for it with your health; you pay

> for it with the kind of culture you create. . . . Instead of talking about low wages and other constraints . . . we need to rethink the percentage of our budget that we spend on food. Only when people are willing to pay for it will our relationship with the land become more sustainable."[14]

This politics of voting with your fork has shaped where farmers markets are created, which markets are deemed worthy of a farmer's time, and which consumers are seen as supportive of small farmers and environmental sustainability. It is also a politics that presumes that farmers markets do better in upper-class white communities compared to working-class communities of color because residents of the latter do not prioritize healthy eating, care about their bodies, or value fresh food. An outcome of such a perspective is either suspicion of or outright hostility to food assistance programs, as evidenced by Julie Guthman in her work on farmers markets in California: "In reference to a question about expanding entitlement programs to make farmers' markets more affordable to all, one manager responded, 'I'm not sure that I agree that subsidy is the best route. In my experience, the subsidy customers are the least committed and reliable. I believe that the food is affordable to all; it's just a matter of different values and priorities. Education and outreach are the only hope I have of interesting more low-income people.'"[15] In framing barriers to local food consumption as principally those of knowledge and values, a politics of access and affordability rooted in countering social inequities and institutional racism is deemphasized in favor of a missionary politics in which foodies have to bring good food and good values to working-class communities of color. While these beliefs once went largely uncontested, over the past decade there has been a shift in the politics of the food movement, moving away from a stand-alone knowledge and values approach toward one that begins with an understanding of poverty and inequality and focuses on engaging the state as a central player in realizing equitable economic access at farmers markets.[16]

ENYF! is reflective of this shift, as the organization has long critiqued a stand-alone knowledge and values approach while emphasizing the importance of food assistance programs at farmers markets for securing residents' right to food. Three factors have played a role in the organization's embrace of food assistance programs at farmers markets. First, as employees of a community-based organization rather than a pop-up farmers market run by nonlocal people, staff members have direct knowledge of and experience with the foodways of East New Yorkers and how they are shaped by racial inequities. "People make logical and reasonable choices every day to eat what is convenient and affordable for them," proclaimed Sarita Daftary-Steel, project director of ENYF! who identifies as Indian-American and Italian-American: "People on the Upper West Side [of Manhattan] do that, but what they can afford and what is close to them is different than what is

affordable and close here. If I can only hammer home one point, it is always that access is really important. Any amount of talking you do about what people should eat does not matter as much as making sure that food is available and affordable. Unless we can really commit ourselves to changing that dynamic, any progress will be minimal."

Daftary-Steel's statement underscores the importance of looking at the intersection of household income and the community's foodscape. The eating patterns of East New Yorkers are shaped by a food environment that has a lot of bodegas and fast-food establishments, a small number of grocery stores full of ultra-processed foods, and a handful of West Indian greengrocers. A food environment where around 40 percent of the households do not own an automobile. Given the economic marginalization of East New Yorkers—their median household income is below $40,000, and close to 32 percent rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits—food budgets are tight and generally shaped by discount shopping, coupon clipping, and store-brand sales. The community has one of the highest rates of food insecurity in New York City (24 percent), with a meal gap—the number of meals missing from the household due to the financial inability to buy food—of 5.8 million in 2017, which breaks down to over 161 missing meals per food-insecure person.[17] This means that soup kitchens and food pantries that are not able to keep up with demand and the vast majority of youths receive free breakfast and lunch at public schools.[18] Given these economic realities, it is unjust to expect residents to pay more for fresh local produce, as that would mean less money to pay for rent, transportation, clothes, utilities, and health care in a community where 52 percent of households already pay over half of their monthly income on rent.[19] In addition, working-class households already spend a higher percentage of their monthly income on groceries than do middle- and upper-class households (10.2 percent compared to 7.7 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively), so pushing East New Yorkers to spend even more money on food only intensifies existing racial, ethnic, and class inequities.[20]

The second factor shaping ENYF!'s embrace of food assistance programs is the economics of farmers markets—specifically, ENYF!'s experiences with how poverty and economic inequality are major barriers to making fresh local produce affordable for working-class communities through farmers markets. While the ENYF! Saturday farmers market is now a happening place, this stands in stark contrast to its humble beginnings in 1998, when one community gardener and a Cornell cooperative extension employee sold produce on a door propped up on two chairs in front of UCC. Back then there were no small farmers selling at the market, few community gardeners growing produce for sale, and no food assistance programs for residents to use at the market. Over the following twenty years, the market has steadily grown in size due to increased

revenue from food assistance programs—revenue that has been leveraged to bring three small farmers to the market and assist numerous local gardeners in growing produce for the market. David Vigil, youth program director of ENYF!, reinforced how central food assistance programs are to the viability of the farmers market: "They provide over 50 percent of our market income. That is a pretty substantial amount of dollars coming in either [in] the form of WIC (the Women's Infant and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program [WIC FMNP]), Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program [SFMNP] coupons, or SNAP, and without them we would have a hard time supporting a market of our size." From 2008 to 2018, on average 50.8 percent of sales at the farmers market were in the form of cash, while 49.2 percent of sales at the farmers markets were from food assistance programs. More specifically, 23.5 percent came from WIC FMNP, 15.2 percent from the SFMNP, 5.4 percent from the WIC Fruit and Vegetable Program, 4.5 percent from SNAP, and 0.6 percent from Health Bucks (HB) and Fresh Connect (FC) (table 2).

The third factor shaping the organization's embrace of food assistance programs is the social justice politics of UCC, which has pushed ENYF! to focus on poverty and inequality as the major problems limiting the benefits of farmers markets for working-class communities. UCC's history of fighting educational segregation, planned shrinkage, and the new Jim Crow in East New York has molded how ENYF! frames the roots of food inequities as based on racialized patterns of public and private divestment and ENYF!'s view of the state as having an obligation to secure civil, economic, and human rights for its residents precisely because of this history. This social justice politics was apparent when Daftary-Steel claimed that publicly funded food assistance programs are the moral responsibility of the state and vital for ENYF! to be able to achieve its goal of securing East New Yorkers' right to food:

> The government should ultimately be responsible for making sure that people are able to afford healthy food and live healthy lives, or at least to ensure that people have equal access to that opportunity. It is important to recognize that we do not now nor will we in the short term have a food system that enables people with limited financial resources to afford to buy healthy food on their own. Ideally you would want people's wages to be higher so they can afford fresh food, or you would want better farm and food policies that are more successful at making fresh produce affordable and available across the board. But in the situation we have now, food assistance programs do help people to afford that food, which is really important. These programs are a transfer of wealth from people who have too much to a community that has too little, and that is what helps us run our program and do good work in the community.

Table 2

Types of Food Assistance Programs at ENYF!'s Farmers Markets

Program	Description
WIC FMNP	This federal program provides coupons to WIC recipients to purchase local produce at farmers markets to increase its consumption among low-income women and children. Each recipient generally receives a coupon amount between $10 and $30 annually at the federal level, but states can supplement these amounts with their own funds. In fiscal year (FY) 2018, funding for the program was $18.548 million, and over 1.7 million of the 6.8 million WIC recipients received benefits from the program.[1]
WIC Fruit and Vegetable	This federal program provides coupons to WIC recipients to purchase selected fruits and vegetables for themselves or their children. Unlike WIC FMNP's benefits, its benefits can be redeemed at grocery stores as well as farmers markets. The program's vouchers come in denominations of $8 for children and $11 for mothers.[2] In FY2018, the average recipient received $492 in coupons.[3]
SFMNP	This federal program provides coupons to low-income seniors to purchase fresh local produce from farmers markets, farm stands, and community supported agriculture programs. In FY2018, the program received more than $19 million in funding, and over 811,000 seniors received benefits (between $20 and $50 per person).[4]
SNAP	Commonly known as food stamps, this federal program provides nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families. Its benefits can be used at any retailer that is approved to accept them. In FY2018, the budget for SNAP was $65.1 billion. Over forty million people participated, and the average monthly benefit per person was $125.25.[5]
Health Bucks	Health Bucks was created by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to increase SNAP recipients' ability to buy fruits and vegetables. For every $5 that a SNAP recipient spends at a farmers market, the person receives a $2 Health Bucks coupon that can be redeemed for fruits and vegetables.[6] Thus, the $2 coupon represents a 40 percent increase in purchasing power for the recipient. Over 515,000 coupons, collectively worth $1.03 million, were distributed in 2018.[7]
Fresh Connect	Fresh Connect operates on the same model as Health Bucks (providing $2 coupons for every $5 spent through SNAP), but it is funded by the State of New York. If a recipient obtains both a Health Bucks and a Fresh Connect voucher, that equals a 90 percent increase in purchasing power. In 2018, the program realized nearly $500,000 in sales.[8]

Note: Acronyms are explained in the text.

[1] United States Department of Agriculture," What Is the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?," January 23, 2014.

[2] United States Department of Agriculture, "WIC Benefits and Services," October 10, 2013, https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-benefits-and-services.

[3] United States Department of Agriculture," What Is the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?"

[4] United States Department of Agriculture, "What Is the SFMNP?," October 18, 2013, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/overview.

[5] United States Department of Agriculture, "SNAP Data Tables," January 14, 2022, http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap.

[6] New York City Department Health and Mental Hygiene, *Farmers' Markets Initiatives: Promoting Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Underserved Communities, 2010 Report* (New York: New York City Department Health and Mental Hygiene, 2010), 1.

[7] New York City Food Policy, *New York City Food Policy: 2018 Food Metrics Report* (New York: New York City Food Policy, 2018), 23.

[8] New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, *NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets: 2018 Annual Report* (Albany: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, 2018), 8.

Barriers to Securing the Right to Food at ENYF!'s Farmers Markets

For ENYF! staff members, the redistributive politics of food assistance programs are vital to creating the conditions for food equity in East New York. Without the state's reallocation of wealth from upper-class communities to working-class ones, many East New Yorkers would be unable to afford fresh, culturally appropriate foods at farmers markets. At the same time, a number of logistical, financial, and marketing problems reduce the ability of food assistance programs to secure residents' right to food. One of the major problems is the small monetary amounts provided to WIC FMNP and SFMNP recipients, an issue compounded by the fact that these coupons are distributed only once per market season (June to November). "The programs are definitely a step in the right direction," said Vigil, "but in terms of what people actually get, it is a pretty nominal amount." "The packets people receive at senior centers and WIC centers are $20 and $25 dollars per season," explained Deborah Greig, agriculture director at ENYF!, "so people will come and spend their whole packet in one day—which makes you wonder, why is it just $20, and why just once? Increasing that amount to even $40 is obviously a huge difference." Vigil concurred: "Just increasing the amount per person would be great."

Such a small one-time distribution does not even come close to providing the recipient with the ability to regularly afford farmers market produce, but what if the amount was monthly, or even weekly, rather than once a season? For $20 or $25 per week at the farmers market, one could buy a half pint of hot peppers, pints of cherry tomatoes, sweet peppers, and tomatillos, a couple of eggplants, a head of broccoli, and bunches of callaloo, collard greens, bok choy, beets, and green beans.[21] If working-class people are able to buy this assortment of produce every week from June through November as opposed to once a year, that would have a meaningful impact on securing their right to food. And if the monetary amount was doubled, a resident could purchase even more food—including several bags of salad mix; bunches of carrots and Malabar spinach; pints of okra and plums; and pounds of sweet potato, bitter melon, zucchini, corn, and garlic.

The limited monetary amounts for WIC FMNP and SFMNP coupons definitely limits their effectiveness at farmers markets. The disbursement date late in the season produces additional problems for generating effective demand at the market. "For New York State, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program suffers from severe delays," said Daftary-Steel. She continued:

> Every year we can see at the farmers markets the week the senior coupons have been released. It is usually at the end of August or sometimes has been as late as early September, and the seniors are flooding in. What that means is that seniors

> have not been able to use those vouchers on produce all throughout the summer, when there might have been some other products they would have wanted. And farmers have been there the whole summer with a significant part of their potential customer base pretty absent because they have not received their vouchers yet. That is a small thing that significantly impacts that program.

This disbursement problem is a result of how the federal and state governments organize and fund the SFMNP, according to Daftary-Steel:

> It is a joint federal- and state-funded program, and funding on the state side is only confirmed year to year. It is not until the end of June that the state is sure that they have the money for the senior checks, and then all those checks are printed and mailed out of the central office in Albany to all the different senior centers. But the funding model that exists for the program at the federal level only provides funding for the vouchers. It does not cover administrative costs, and once the funding all comes together, the state staff are really overstretched and struggling to get the packets printed and mailed out to all the senior centers throughout the state. The result of this is that senior coupons end up getting out to people late. This is very different from how WIC checks are done, where each WIC center has the capacity to print their own checks.

My discussions with ENYF! staff members show that improving the SFMNP for recipients will require a move to dedicated multiyear funding from the state; state or federal funding that covers staff as well as vouchers; and potentially a decentralization of disbursement from the state level to senior centers, similar to what already happens at WIC centers. This would allow the vouchers to arrive when the farmers market season begins and to be spread throughout the season rather than coming only near the end.

These changes are important in reducing food inequities for East New Yorkers, because increasing effective demand for produce at farmers markets in working-class communities is key to maintaining the markets' economic viability. "We have lots of great stuff in June and July that we just cannot sell because we do not have the customer volume, because coupons are not out yet," stated Vigil. Greig concurred, "The farmers market really struggles to stay afloat until seniors get those coupons." This matters for small farmers because food assistance programs are an income-support program for them. They are "a back-end funding of small farmers," explained Greig. "Those small farmers are not getting subsidies from the government directly. They are getting them on the consumer end." Based on this economic picture, if food assistance programs are going to be an effective income-support program for urban residents and small farmers, the programs need to be better funded.

One way that ENYF! has sought to increase effective demand at its markets to benefit residents and small farmers is through channeling food assistance program revenue to community gardeners. "Urban agriculture has been happening in East New York way before ENYF!, and we really see our role as just facilitating the work that is already happening and expanding it," declared Vigil. He continued:

> One thing that's special about ENYF! is that our gardeners were the first urban growers to be certified to receive FMNP coupons, which shows how we have kind of led the way with finding solutions for bringing food access to East New York. While we are not able to compete on volume with rural growers, urban growers are a critical component to making our farmers markets successful in terms of community building. Making sure our communities still have access to land and resources to grow food themselves is important because that is often where the community building and behavior change happens first, [with] people experiencing this on a day-to-day [basis] in their own community and then it is like, "Oh!" After that, if they are in the habit of getting collards or tomatoes from their local community garden, then they are more likely to buy those from farmers at the market as well.

Vigil's comment emphasizes that farmers markets can link community gardeners with small rural farmers in a manner that is beneficial to gardeners, farmers, and residents, since urban growers cannot generally feed the whole community by themselves and small rural farmers do not have the time to build up a larger and more dedicated customer base by themselves. But this relationship is dependent on the farmers markets being rooted in the community and reflecting residents' desires, which underscores that who is running the farmers market matters for both the residents and the rural farmers. A pop-up farmers market run by nonlocals may not be able to generate enough community buy-in and therefore enough income for farmers to make it worth anybody's time. Vigil's remarks also point out that increasing the use of food assistance programs at farmers markets is important as part of a larger strategy to direct public funds to grassroots organizations that use community food systems to address racial, ethnic, and class inequities, for without such programs, the farmers market could not function as a community hub for ENYF!

Funding and disbursement problems are not the only issues affecting the farmers markets. Advertising, or the lack of it, is a recurring problem for ENYF! in its efforts to make the farmers markets known as a place where all East New Yorkers can purchase culturally appropriate produce that is local and affordable. "Our experience with the ENYF! farmers market," stressed Daftary-Steel,

> has been that there is a lot of community interest in it and that food assistance programs have definitely been a way to make up the gap between what people can afford to pay and what farmers need to make. People do use food stamps at the farmers market, and some of the incentive programs have really worked to expand the use of food stamps at farmer markets. But it is not just the incentives that help, such as a two-dollar coupon for every five dollars you spend with SNAP. It is also that whenever they do incentive programs, advertising comes along with it, and this means that the city is actually putting some resources into advertising farmers markets in a very specific way.

Daftary-Steel's insights call attention to the fact that food assistance programs and incentive programs do not necessarily work in and of themselves: advertising these programs to the public as an ongoing effort is crucial to their effectiveness in addressing inequitable food relations. "Because of disinvestment and urban design, you do not necessarily have massive public spaces in East New York that are like Grand Army Plaza that are just going to, on their own, draw hundreds and hundreds of people every day," said Daftary-Steel. She continued:

> You need to be more intentional, and it is always going to be ongoing. It is frustrating to write grants where you have to make an argument that you are going to do outreach for a year or even three years, and then you are going to be done because of a feeling that "People are educated, it is over, this program is now sustainable." Think about Coca-Cola. Everybody knows Coke, and they still advertise all the time. Advertising is just an ongoing thing for companies, and government funding models sometimes do not recognize that and get boxed into "Oh, we need to do this advertising because we have never done it before, and then once we do it, it is going to be done."

Take the Saturday farmers market for instance. It is located on a one-way street off New Lots Avenue, adjacent to a small public library and public playground. The Wednesday farmers market is in front of Hands and Heart Garden. While both are in the core of the New Lots section of East New York, neither market's location generates the pedestrian traffic of Grand Army Plaza or Union Square, which are large public spaces, subway stops, and tourist attractions all in one. As a result, ENYF!'s farmers markets need far more advertising than other farmers markets to generate customers. Unfortunately, the one-time advertising model of many public programs and agencies, while well intentioned, often produces ads that are drowned out in an advertising landscape centered on Big Food. The government needs to become financially invested in and very deliberate about its efforts to build knowledge of and support for food assistance programs at farmers markets through advertisements

in local papers and home mailings, on radio and TV, and through social media apps, much as corporations do for their products.[22]

A robust multimodal advertising campaign for farmers markets and food assistance programs could go a long way toward strengthening community food systems oriented toward social justice as well as the right to food for communities of color. This is especially true for SNAP, a program whose spending power at ENYF!'s farmers markets is potentially enormous but in actuality constitutes a smaller revenue stream than WIC FMNP, SFMNP, and WIC Fruit and Vegetable program. This disparity exists although annual spending at the national level is in the billions for SNAP but in the tens of millions for the other three programs. Furthermore, the amount provided to the average SNAP recipient in 2018 was much larger ($1,512) than that provided to the average recipients of the other three programs ($492 for WIC Fruit and Vegetable, $30 for WIC FMNP, and $50 for SFMNP).[23] On top of this, unlike WIC Fruit and Vegetable, SFMNP, and WIC FMNP, SNAP benefits from two publicly funded matching programs at farmers markets (HB and FC), which increases recipients' purchasing power by 90 percent.

One reason for the lack of SNAP redemptions at the farmers markets compared to WIC FMNP and SFMNP coupons is that SNAP can be spent at any approved retailer, while benefits from the other two nutrition programs can be spent only at farmers markets. This problem pushes Vigil to desire a special SNAP farmers market allotment to incentivize people to see the market as a place to spend their food dollars. "We have an incentive program for SNAP recipients," said Vigil. "But at the end of the day, a lot of SNAP users do not necessarily know or think about the farmers market as a place to use their card. And so if, for example, they had a special allotment on their card that they could use at the farmers markets, that could really increase the amount of SNAP users that are shopping at the farmers market." A special farmers market allocation for SNAP, when combined with matching programs, would significantly increase recipients' purchasing power in meaningful ways and thereby make local and regional produce much more affordable. This is especially true since SNAP is designed to help recipients purchase the low-priced industrial commodities of Big Ag and Big Food, not the local, organic, or chemical-free produce of small farmers or food justice organizations.[24]

Once again, though, the success of such a program would by shaped by how well it is advertised to SNAP recipients. "Outreach to SNAP users is something that I think could improve," Vigil said. "We have seen a huge increase in the number of customers in years where the city agency that oversees SNAP has done a mailing to SNAP recipients to let them know about the Health Bucks incentive. There is a lot more that could be done to really advertise markets as a resource." ENYF! has sought to address this lack of information about food assistance programs at its farmers markets through mailings to

residents, fliers in bodegas, workshops at senior centers, and general word of mouth, but it still encounters a lack of knowledge about the markets from residents. "The ability to use SNAP at the farmers market—that is something people do not realize or learn until they have come to the farmers market multiple times," noted Greig. "Often people will come with their FMNP or SFMNP checks and then be, 'Oh, I did not realize I could spend my SNAP here. I did not realize I got a five-dollar coupon.' That is something where if you have repeat visits by one family as opposed to all these one-time hits, people do realize they can buy things and you can build that food economy."

The underuse of SNAP at ENYF!'s farmers markets is not unique to the organization but part of a nationwide problem that dates back nearly three decades. In general from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, SNAP recipients were unable to spend their food assistance dollars at farmers markets because the program was transitioning away from being a paper coupon to the now-standard debit card, referred to as an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card.[25] This technological change created two major problems for organizations running farmers markets. One problem was financial: they lacked the funds to cover debit card merchant fees. The other was logistical: they lacked access to card reader machines, electricity to power these machines, and the internet access needed to accept EBT cards.[26] Consequently, by 2004 only 7.8 percent of farmers markets accepted SNAP, and SNAP redemptions declined threefold from the previous decade, as SNAP recipients quickly learned that farmers markets (whether in working-, middle-, or upper-class communities) were not for them.

Realizing this inequity, those in the antihunger, community food security, and food justice movements began mobilizing to bring SNAP access back to farmers markets. It took a lot of time and energy, but by 2017 nearly 42 percent of farmers markets were accepting SNAP.[27] This dramatic increase in SNAP access at farmers markets also began to achieve its goal of increasing SNAP redemptions at the markets, with those redemptions increasing sevenfold since 2008.[28] As a result, after bottoming out in the mid-2000s, the percentage of SNAP redemptions at farmers markets is nearing early 1990s numbers.[29] On the other hand, many farmers markets still do not offer SNAP access, and although the markets constitute 1.38 percent of all SNAP authorized retailers, they receive only 0.02 percent of all redemptions.[30] Therefore, a lot of work still needs to done to ensure that all farmers markets offer SNAP access, working-class households know they can use SNAP at farmers markets, and using SNAP dollars at farmers markets is economically beneficial for working-class households.

The Battle over SNAP: Securing the Right to Food

According to ENYF! staff members, food assistance programs at farmers markets are central to addressing inequitable food relations in working-class

communities, and the turn by the food movement toward embracing these programs is encouraging because they need to be strengthened and expanded in many ways. Yet this turn has not been widely accepted within the United States. In fact, there has been a lot of backlash from conservatives based on claims that such programs increase government dependency, destroy the work ethic, and facilitate the rise of an entitlement society.

Although these claims are not new within conservative circles, they became daily headlines in 2011 and 2012 when President Barack Obama was running for reelection. During this time Newt Gingrich, a Republican presidential candidate, asserted that he was a "candidate of paychecks," while in Barack Obama "[w]e are going to have the candidate of food stamps, the finest food stamp president in American history."[31] Representative Jim Jordan (R-OH) echoed this theme when he stated that SNAP "is harmful for a culture and a country, when you have one in seven people thinking it's OK for someone else to feed them."[32] In an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, the libertarian author James Bovard referred to the increase in SNAP participation under the presidencies of George Bush Jr. and Barack Obama as an example of a broader movement "urging people to accept government handouts," one that threatens the very foundation of liberty, as "the more people who become government dependents, the more likely that democracy will become a conspiracy against self-reliance."[33] Not to be outdone, another op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, this one by the WSJ's editorial board member Steve Moore, claimed that SNAP has become the "latest middle-class entitlement."[34]

The Right's framing of SNAP as a program that supports freeloaders and enables people to get food without working for it is a key component of a raced, classed, and gendered attack on women and children, people of color, and working-class people. Since the 1960s this attack that has been part and parcel of the Republican Party's southern strategy, which frames white people as hard workers who are deserving of government support and people of color as lazy and therefore undeserving of such support.[35] This frame was very apparent in Gingrich's positioning of himself as the paycheck candidate versus Obama as the food stamp candidate, and this race baiting (also known as dog whistle politics) has been very effective in the Right's promotion of a so-called small-state politics that is against taxes.[36] But given that the antitax revolt of the 1960s and 1970s was based in white communities whose members opposed the desegregation of education, employment, and housing to maintain their racialized class privilege, such an anti-tax politics can be better understood as an anti-equity politics.[37] Furthermore, it is an anti-equity politics that is heavily shaped by anti-Black and anti-Chicano sentiment, since it is focused on reducing or eliminating the funds necessary for implementing programs that decrease racial inequalities while keeping in place public policies and programs that secure white privilege, corporate profits, and the wealth of the upper class.

The staying power of the southern strategy was on full display in 2012 when Bill O'Reilly, a longtime political commentator for Fox News, explained why Obama could win reelection: "it's not a traditional America anymore." He argued that 50 percent of voters "want stuff. They want things." According to him, "the white establishment is now the minority. And the voters, many of them . . . want stuff. You are going to see a tremendous Hispanic vote for President Obama. Overwhelming Black vote for President Obama. And women will probably break President Obama's way. People feel that they are entitled to things and which candidate, between the two, is going to give them things?"[38]

O'Reilly explicitly frames the "white [male] establishment" as the people who worked for and thus deservedly earned "things" and Black, Latinx, and female voters as people who just undeservedly demand "things" from the government without working for them. Akin to the contrived image of a so-called welfare queen driving a Cadillac that President Ronald Reagan produced in the 1980s to legitimate the Right's austerity politics, conservatives now create the image of millions of people of color demanding food stamps to buy caviar, cigarettes, alcohol, and junk food to legitimate the defunding of food assistance programs.[39] For example, in 2012 Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) proposed to save $322 billion over ten years by cutting SNAP by $45 billion (about 60 percent of its budget) each year.[40] In 2015 the House Budget Committee proposed to cut SNAP funding by around $125 billion between 2021 and 2025, which would eliminate over a third of its budget during that period.[41] In 2018 the House of Representatives proposed to cut more than $20 billion from SNAP over a span of ten years, reduce the benefits of two million people, and end the eligibility of 265,000 children for free school meals.[42] And in 2019 President Donald Trump proposed to cut SNAP by 30 percent over the following decade (for a total of $213 billion), end eligibility for four million people, and reduce benefits for millions more.[43]

These proposed cuts and the arguments supporting them are extremely unsettling, given that they deliberately ignore the major factors leading to the significant increase in SNAP participation from 2007 to 2013 as well as the decline in SNAP participation from 2013 to 2018. According to the Congressional Budget Office, both of these changes are attributable to structural transformations in the economic organization of society, not the attitudes and behaviors of individuals.[44] Additionally, the claim that SNAP creates dependency among recipients ignores academic and governmental research that has found that SNAP is a countercyclical program whose expansion and contraction mirrors the larger ebbs and flows of the national economy.[45] When the economy contracts and enters a recession or depression, rates of SNAP use increase because wages decline and jobs disappear. Similarly, when the economy starts growing again, those who are able to work leave SNAP because they can find jobs and often experience real wage growth.

The conservative claim that SNAP supports freeloaders and slackers also misrepresents why the program exists in the first place and who uses it. Government assistance to those marginalized within or from the wage-labor economy is a practice that stretches back to the beginning of capitalism precisely because private-sector employers often refuse to provide living-wage employment to all, and people not able to work still need income.[46] This relationship among capitalism, the state, and citizens becomes clear when we look at who receives SNAP. In 2018, 69 percent of SNAP participants were children (44 percent), elderly adults (people age sixty or older; 14 percent), or nonelderly adults receiving Supplemental Security Income disability payments (11 percent).[47] Moreover, the vast majority of working-age adults in SNAP households who are able to work did so, though they are typically in low-wage jobs with high rates of precarity.[48]

Based on these numbers, it is quite clear that SNAP recipients are the working poor and those marginalized within or excluded from the wage-labor economy due to disability or age. The consequence of this marginalization is that the average SNAP household has a total income, not including SNAP, of 62.6 percent of the poverty line in 2018 ($15,712 for a family of four).[49] Furthermore, the average SNAP household today is poorer than its counterpart in the 1990s. The percentage of SNAP households with a gross income of zero has grown from 7 percent in fiscal year 1990 to 19 percent in 2018, while the percentage of SNAP households with a net income of zero (that is, after all applicable deductions) has risen from 19 percent to 36 percent during the same time period.[50] Claiming that SNAP is a middle-class entitlement program deliberately ignores the fact that those on SNAP are the poorest of the poor, which is why SNAP is effective at decreasing the rate of poverty among both households and children.[51]

For ENYF!, the attempt by conservatives and Republicans to enforce draconian cuts in SNAP funding is a blatant attack on the poor and their ability to feed themselves, their children, and the rest of their families, as well as an attack on the ability of the state to uphold its obligations of securing its residents' right to food. "If you view food as a right, then food assistance programs are something the government has to provide because it has failed to create a society in which everybody can afford food," asserted Daftary-Steel. "We need to look at food assistance, and public assistance in general, as our obligation to people because of our government's failure to create an economy that creates living-wage jobs and full employment and where everyone's basic needs are met. Because we failed at that, these other things are necessary and therefore they are owed to people." Daftary-Steel's reframing of food assistance programs as a right for all because the state has failed to provide the conditions for meeting social needs is paramount in contesting the conservative mantra that SNAP recipients do not deserve public assistance and should find a job—especially

given that the majority of recipients are either too young or too old to work, cannot work for medical reasons, were recently employed, or are currently employed.

This reframing of the state's role in realizing the right to food also operates as a strategic intervention in the neoliberal politics of personal responsibility and the myth that hard work is the ticket to upward social mobility. As Daftary-Steel's statement implies, the economic structure of society is organized around a few well-paying jobs, a decent number of okay jobs, and a lot of bad jobs, and there are never enough full-time jobs for those who want them—none of which has anything to do with an individual's work ethic.[52] Instead of focusing on the individual's work ethic, Daftary-Steel shifts the focus to the government's responsibility to shape the economy to create a good quality of life for all, where "everyone's basic needs are met." In doing so, she contests the conservative framing of the state as a night watchman who is hands off and avows markets to regulate themselves.[53] "The overarching story of the problem" of social inequities, said Daftary-Steel,

> is the lack of involvement of the state and how the state should be intervening and putting more resources towards programs, policies, and regulations that will create a fairer system. After the Federal Housing Administration, redlining, and way the G.I. Bill really supported white communities, the state has tried to do things to fix racial inequalities, but it has never put as many resources into fixing the problem as into creating it. The state plays an important role in being able to shape and support fairness, and the state has not always done that. But that does not mean the state should step out and have it become 'the biggest bully in the room wins,' which is basically what is happening now.

According to this framing of the situation, the state has an obligation to address racial, ethnic, and class inequities for three reasons: because they are intertwined with food inequities; because all three inequities have been exacerbated through government programs, policies, and practices; and because the state has a role to play in creating a more equitable society.

Daftary-Steel's assertion that the state has an obligation to address social inequities is also significant since the food movement has long privileged a secessionist politics that avoids placing this demand on the state—a secessionist politics that emerged alongside a conservative counterrevolution in the United States that has moved the state ever closer to being principally a neoconservative state that advances America's empire, a white ethnostate that consolidates white supremacy, and a neoliberal state that prioritizes the profit-based desires of the economic elite over everything else.[54] This conservative counterrevolution has been so powerful in the United States that it even infiltrated the discourse of liberals and Democrats in the 1990s and 2000s, as they

adopted conservative talking points and policies through their support for welfare reform, mass incarceration, free trade, supply-side economics, and anti-immigrant nativism.[55]

In opposition to this anti-equity politics, ENYF! staff members contend that the state has a positive role to play in strengthening community food systems oriented toward social justice and that the food movement needs to work on pushing the state in this direction. This is particularly important for ENYF! because the community food system being built in and through the organization is not presumed to lie outside of the state or be autonomous from it. Rather, its viability is constituted in and through the state and its funding of food assistance programs, community gardens, and urban agriculture programs (see chapters 3 and 5). Thus, the continued success of ENYF! is linked to its ability to reframe how the public understands the links among poverty, inequality, and food, and why food assistance programs are a valuable and necessary practice of the state. Accordingly, protecting food assistance programs from the Right's austerity politics, while also turning them into a conduit for strengthening community food systems oriented toward social justice, should be at the center of food movement politics. Efforts along these lines will require more than the simple technical fix of bringing SNAP access to farmers markets or advocating on behalf of SNAP as a stand-alone policy. In addition, they will entail linking the struggle to maintain and expand SNAP to a broader vision of what the United States stands for, what it should become, and how people can create this new world. Thus, the efforts must tap into and build upon the existing fantasies, desires, and aspirations of people and generate within them the desire to support as well as become involved in making this political vision a reality.[56]

Politics, which at its core is the struggle for power between opposing groups, is not really about the rational debate about the pros and cons of certain policies or programs, their facts and figures, and their economic feasibility. Politics is less rational than we have been led to believe. It is value driven, and people's support of or opposition to particular policies and programs has a lot more to do with how they are framed and marketed and how they do or do not line up with people's existing values. Stephen Duncombe asserts that "politics has always been about fantasy. Politics, at its core, is about imagining what sort of a future world we want, or a past world we'd like to go back to."[57] This assertion helps explain the popularity of Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan. For George Lakoff, the success of this slogan and its ability to resonate with so many people are due to its ability to mesh with their existing conceptual frames—the mental structures that shape the way people see the world, the goals they seek, what they conceive to be good or bad, and the policies and institutions they support or oppose.[58]

According to this argument, if social movements are able to tap into existing frames or change the ones through which people see the world, the

movements can change the political landscape of the United States. The shifts in language from food access to food justice and from food deserts and food swamps to food apartheid are just two examples of how the food justice movement is engaging in this discursive politics to change food politics in this country, and it is doing so by tapping into people's existing social justice frames. However, given the negative framing of the state that has been prominent since the 1970s, there is a need to reactivate a framework within many people that conceptualizes the state as a positive force in society. This chapter shows that Daftary-Steel has begun to do so, putting forth an argument, as well as a political vision, for why and how the state should play a role in addressing inequitable food relations. Yet such arguments were not necessarily connected to unifying phrases that activate people's conceptual frameworks and get them to support policy change.

The Right has been very effective at hammering into people's heads the perception of the state as a negative force in society with phrases such as "the nanny state" and "big government." If the food justice movement wants to reclaim the state as a positive force, it will need to come up with phrases to do so. One possibility is to use the language of the affirmative state coined by Erik Olin Wright.[59] This concept avoids the racist and classist stigmas attached to the notion of welfare in the United States while putting front and center the notion that the state is a supportive and favorable force in society, since this is what "affirmative" means. Wright and Joel Rogers define the affirmative state as "a state that plays an energetic and positive role in the society in solving collective problems and advancing public purposes."[60] A state whose guiding values are premised on the "well-being of all citizens seen as part of a collective responsibility" entails prioritizing "egalitarian social justice, individual liberty combined with popular control over collective decisions, community and solidarity, and the flourishing of individuals in ways which enable them to realize their potentials."[61]

Realizing such a vision of society will require an affirmative state that intervenes in the creation and regulation of markets, the distribution of income and wealth, and the distribution of power in the workplace and the electoral process so that it can "serve [the] broader social and economic goals" of the public as well as "counteract a host of negative effects generated by the dynamics of capitalist economies."[62] Such interventions could take a number of forms, including labor market policies that push for full employment, living wages, collective bargaining rights, shorter hours, a universal basic income, indexing the minimum wage to the median wage, and keeping the salaries of CEOs to no more than twenty-five times the average worker's pay. The interventions could create such public goods as universal health care, a public banking system, postal banking, universal mail-in voting, municipally owned utilities, public land banks, free public transportation, and worker cooperatives. They

would definitely need to include a Black New Deal that incorporated massive investment in the infrastructure of communities of color, from community centers and cultural institutions to parks, schools, and permanently affordable housing. Such a Black New Deal could also include baby bonds, stakeholder grants, reparations, and dedicated funds for Black-owned land, housing, and business cooperatives. Another component would be ending the new Jim Crow through defunding law enforcement and shifting these funds to programs that improve the social and economic welfare of communities of color. While this is a short list from a multitude of possibilities, achieving these changes would help realize a more just society for communities of color by decommodifying social needs, steering markets toward reducing poverty and inequality, and shifting public funds away from institutions of repression.

Conclusion: Food Justice, Food Assistance Programs, and the Affirmative State

Farmers markets are a crucial space in the food movement, and while they have been economically beneficial to small farmers, this has often come at the expense of realizing the right to food for working-class communities of color. ENYF!, as part of a broader national movement, has sought to address this inequity by bringing food assistance programs to farmers markets with the twin goals of increasing economic access for residents and strengthening community food systems oriented toward social justice. Its efforts have had some success, but these gains are limited by numerous barriers in how food assistance programs are funded, organized, and advertised. These efforts are also under threat from the Right's raced, classed, and gendered attack on food assistance programs and its attempt to prevent the state from pursuing a social equity politics.

Even with these barriers, it is still possible for the state to organize food assistance programs in a way that would strengthen a just and sustainable food system. Yet to do this several changes are necessary, including increasing funding, year-round distribution of WIC FMNP and SFMNP coupons, increasing SNAP funding specific to farmers markets, and expanding the advertising of SNAP access at farmers markets. Realizing such changes will not be easy, and doing so is largely dependent on the food justice movement being able to reframe how the public understands food inequities, food assistance programs, and the role of the state in addressing inequitable food relations. This reframing is dependent on shifting the cultural politics of the United States away from personal responsibility and toward collective responsibility and changing the conception of the state from one that is negative to one that is positive.

ENYF! is part of a food justice movement that is working to move food politics from secession to confrontation by fighting for a state that privileges social needs and human rights—what Wright calls an affirmative state. However, the

ability of the food justice movement to achieve this goal is hampered by a funding landscape that limits the ability of food justice organizations to do their vital community-building work, let alone articulate a big picture of what the United States could be and the role of the state in realizing this vision. This issue, which looms large over the political future of the food justice movement, is the topic of chapter 5.

5

Money and the Food Justice Movement

The Limits of Nonprofit Activism

On a warm August evening, community gardeners and ENYF! staff members (about twenty people in all) came together for their monthly meeting in the gym at UCC. They were seated in a circle around a snack table and an easel with a large pad of paper. The meeting was less of a nuts-and-bolts discussion about growing food and more of an envisioning workshop in which East New Yorkers could explore their ideas about how to realize food justice in their community. Sarita Daftary-Steel, project director of ENYF!, started the meeting by asking those in attendance to speak about a specific organization whose campaign or advocacy they were proud of. One person brought up 596 Acres, a small organization working with communities across New York City to convert vacant city-owned land into community gardens. Another discussed the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement, a social movement of landless people fighting against the plantation aristocracy in Brazil for the right to farm and own unused land. A third person spoke about the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and its efforts to improve the working conditions of tomato pickers in Florida by taking on the big institutional food purchasers—including Taco Bell, Whole Foods, and Publix. The Weeksville Heritage Center in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, was also discussed. This organization works to preserve the history of one of America's first free Black communities and is building a seed

Table 3
Strategies for Change

Working within the current system				Creating a new system
Reactive		Proactive		Visionary
Service	*Resistance*	*Reform*	*Government*	*New alternatives*
Addressing a crisis	Stopping the bad	Winning something good	Running things	Creating something new

library (which already includes more than five hundred plants) based on Black growing traditions.

These stories jump-started the conversation about social justice activism and pushed participants to think about what issues people mobilized around, why they did so, and how they organized to achieve their goals. Daftary-Steel built upon this momentum by introducing the strategies for change table, which uses a framework for thinking about social change that incorporates different notions, aspects, and purposes of change, as well as their political content (table 3). The table focused on two main strategies for change: working within the system and creating a new system. The first strategy was broken down into four different components, each with their own respective political focus: service emphasized addressing a crisis, resistance centered on stopping the bad, reform sought to win something good, and government was about running things. Within this framework, service and resistance were labeled as reactive efforts, while reform and government were labeled as proactive efforts. In comparison, the strategy of creating a new system had only one component: building alternatives, which focused on creating something new and was labeled as visionary.

Through analyzing and discussing the table, participants at the meeting were pushed to think more theoretically, as well as concretely, about the politics of social change and where ENYF! fit into a larger movement for social justice. Gardeners spoke about the community gardens, the farmers, and the youth program, discussing whether such efforts worked within the current system or were creating a new system. Many mentioned that ENYF! appeared to combine bits of service, resistance, reform, and new alternatives. ENYF! was addressing crises of food access and health, working to convert vacant lots to community gardens, providing youths with paid employment, and creating farmers markets as community spaces. Daftary-Steel emphasized that ENYF! did engage in all these activities, but they were not directly connected to working within the system. ENYF! was not setting up a food bank or soup kitchen to fight hunger, which would be a form of service. It was not stopping bodegas

or grocery stores from selling their staples, an example of resistance. It was not directly fighting to restructure the Farm Bill or getting people to run for political office, which would be reform and government, respectively. Instead, ENYF!'s organizing, activism, and politics of social change are ideologically and materially about building a community-based food system that is oriented toward social justice and is outside of the conventional food system. However, this does not preclude the organization from accepting public funding structures or partnering with other organizations to demand justice and equity for East New Yorkers within the current social system. It just means that the majority of the organization's efforts are spent trying to build and strengthen community-generated alternatives to that system.

Yet it is precisely in this pursuit of food justice that the organization encounters the recurring problem of securing the funds vital to realizing its dream. Through interviews with staff members, this chapter details the tensions that exist between the goals of ENYF! and two of the funding streams for food justice organizations: philanthropic grants and market-based sales.[1] These tensions raise concerns about the political trajectory of the food justice movement, since these funding streams have the potential to push organizations away from projects that prioritize just sustainabilities in favor of reformist efforts that privilege a stand-alone food access politics as well as neoliberal efforts that pursue a food-based entrepreneurialism disconnected from social justice.[2] In discussing how ENYF! approaches these tensions, Daftary-Steel mentioned higher taxes on the wealthy as a long-term solution that would give food justice organizations more room to maneuver as they pursue a politics of racial equity and community self-determination. I build upon this claim by emphasizing how mobilizing people on behalf of this objective will ultimately entail reframing how people conceptualize democracy, freedom, and taxes.

The Funding Landscape for ENYF!: Working within Constraints

After its unassuming start with one community gardener and a Cornell Cooperative Extension agent managing a farm stand, ENYF! now encompass three urban farms, two farmers markets, a network of more than forty food-producing community gardens, six full-time staff members, and an annual budget of around half a million dollars.[3] The smallest source of funds, accounting for about 5 percent (around $22,500) of the budget, is internal: produce sales at the farmers markets and fees from market vendors. Government grants are next and constitute about 30 percent (around $135,000). Recently, these funds have come from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for the youth program, a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers Market Promotion grant for agritourism, a New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation grant for developing an urban farm, a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant for crop planting with gardeners, and a Center for Disease Control and Prevention Community Transformation grant to address health inequities. In the past, ENYF! has received government funding through a USDA Community Food Project grant, a USDA Farmers Market Promotion grant, a New York City Department of Youth and Community Development grant, and discretionary funds from New York City Council members Charles Barron and Inez Barron. The rest of the funds (about 65 percent, or around $292,500), come from private philanthropic institutions. Private funding has always been a substantial and vital component of ENYF!'s funding stream. It has come from a range of institutions supporting community gardening and youth programming, including Heifer International, the Hitachi Foundation, the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the Levitt Foundation, the Merck Family Fund, the Pinkerton Foundation, the Grinnell Memorial Trust, and the William C. Bullitt Foundation.

While ENYF! has three different sources of funding, the government and private grants originate from a multitude of sources. The organization generally has two large grants of $60,000–$70,000 each and a handful of others that are just $8,000–$10,000, with the majority in the $20,000–$30,000 range. In addition to this diversification of grant streams, ENYF!'s funding landscape has been shaped by three shifts over its two-plus decades of existence. One long-term trend is a shift in the source of funding away from government sources and toward private foundations. Another long-term trend is a shift in the use of funding from community gardening to youth programming. This has been most apparent with private funders, who are increasingly interested in funding youth agriculture programs. A more recent trend is an increase in municipal and state grants for urban agriculture, due to its growing popularity as a medium for the provision of community-based social and ecological programming.

Given the size of ENYF!'s private funding and its growing share as a source of organizational funds, I spoke to staff members about their experiences with private funders. A common theme that emerged was the need to educate funders about how to create funding structures that work for, rather than against, community-based food justice organizations. "I do not think our issues are particular to ENYF!, in that most nonprofits struggle to cover their overhead," stated David Vigil, youth program director at ENYF!. "They can get funding for programs but not general support or overhead, which is just unsustainable because you have to put a lot of effort into running and operating these programs rather than necessarily doing what you need to do to develop a long-term strategy as an organization and get good at it." The unwillingness of philanthropic foundations to fund staff positions is a recurring problem for the

organization. Daftary-Steel spoke about one situation in which she was discussing funding staff salaries with two different foundations simultaneously but was encountering all sorts of roadblocks:

> The funders from organization A only wanted to fund stipends for our youth program. Everybody knows that what makes youth programming good or not is the staff who run it, and the funding representative for organization B said, "Well, I can't go the board with a budget that's all for salary." So what happened was I could put salary in the application, but I had to shift some of it [the money originally budgeted for salaries] to stipends and supplies. That statement in itself is unreasonable, though. Why can't you fund salaries? It is not like we are spending more on staff than we otherwise would. We are not using this to start off-shore bank accounts. This is still paying our staff what we were going to pay our staff regardless. It is just that somebody else wants to pay stipends, and you know our program, you have funded us before—why are you not willing to just be the people who pay for staff salaries?

Daftary-Steel's example raises the million-dollar question for ENYF!: how is a youth program going to nurture the next generation of leaders without a skilled and adequately compensated staff? Odds are that it will not be able to do so. What appears to be missing in the funding calculus of philanthropic foundations is that organizations are bigger than their programs, which means that the organization's staff needs to be a high priority since they run the organization and its programs. In fact, by devaluing the labor, knowledge, and experience of staff members and failing to trust them to run the organization, funders are ultimately setting up such organizations for limited gains, mixed results, and long-term failure. Given this problem, Daftary-Steel stressed that "in terms of having wins in the food justice movement, there is education that needs to be done for funders and policy makers so that they are able to operate in a way where they really listen and get that the people running the programs are the experts and know how to do it and they do not try and prescribe for you what you should do and how you should do it."

ENYF!'s criticism of the lack of general operating support in philanthropic grants is one that has developed over the organization's history and is deeply influenced by Daftary-Steel's initial employment at ENYF! through the AmeriCorps VISTA program. "Th[at] experience really made me question how useful people could be in a short period of time," confessed Daftary-Steel:

> My VISTA period was supposed to be a year, and I extended it six months. In all, it was a year and a half total. But if I had not stayed after that—I just do not know what people expect to accomplish if they are in a position for a year or even two years. I think that something that is really unique about us [ENYF!]

> is a lot of our staff have been here for a long time. And that is also a UCC thing—a lot of staff have been there for a really long time. I feel that so much of the progress we have made has been because we stayed long enough to [say], "This is what we did last year that did not work, and so we are going to do it differently. And then we are going to do it better this year, and then next year we are going to look at how we did that." Being able to do that is just such a crucial part of doing your job well. And community organizations and nonprofits suffer from a lot of high turnover that prevents them from doing a good job.

This foundational experience, subsequently shaped by a decade of employment at the organization, is a major reason why Daftary-Steel sees grants for salary and general operating support as central to creating effective programming and running a successful organization. Investing in salaries creates the conditions for staff members to learn what works, what does not work, and what needs to be tweaked—knowledge that does not emerge if people at an organization are continually cycling in and out with no institutional experience or community connection. There is no community food system without a community, and a community is not built overnight. Instead, such a system must be built with familiar faces and a coherent mission that makes sense to the community. It can take years or even decades to achieve this, especially in communities living with fractured social ties, a distrust of government, a nepotistic political environment, and high rates of residential mobility. Long-term funding for staff is therefore vital to generating the institutional stability and community buy-in that can facilitate long-term organizational achievement, especially if the organization's goal is not merely providing a service but also building power.

Unfortunately, ENYF! staff members know that the preference of philanthropic foundations for short-term program-based grants is not going to change any time soon, so the organization has had to cultivate a strategy to minimize the harms generated by such a funding model. "We tend to apply for smaller grants so that we are not dependent on one stream of funding," noted Vigil. "That way, if we lose any one particular grant it is not going to cause the whole organization to fold. This has allowed us to avoid the boom and bust that a lot of other nonprofits go through. At the same time, it also means turning down opportunities if we do not think we can sustain them in the future, and that is a conscious choice on our part." This strategy is not unique to ENYF!, but it is one that the organization has been successful with because it has played to ENYF!'s strengths and allowed it to use its diversity of programming to secure a wide range of grants. "One thing that is a particular advantage for us is that our programming encompasses so much that there is actually quite a bit of different funding streams," emphasized Vigil. "The fact [is] that we have had funding to work with older adults, to work with youth, we have

had USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program funding, we have had USDA Agricultural Research Program funding, we have had grants that are specific to women and girls. The sheer diversity of our programs is what has allowed us to sustain ourselves."

However, the diversity of ENYF! is not equally valued by funders. Vigil stated: "We have a strong youth program, and that helps us get quite a bit of funding. But it is harder to get funding for the work that we do with adults, especially older adults. There is just not as many [funding options] nor as much funding out there for doing that work." The lack of funding for adult programming is disadvantageous to ENYF! because one of its main activities is working with the community gardeners to secure land, grow food, and sell food at the farmers markets, and most of the gardeners are ages 40–80. These adult gardeners are the core of the community food system in East New York, and without their long-term work in growing food and building community relations, the work of ENYF! would not be successful.

Funding for adult programming is also important because ENYF! does a lot of intergenerational work between the youth program and the adult gardeners, with the youths assisting the gardeners in growing and selling their produce and the gardeners passing on their agricultural knowledge to the youths. Additionally, the organization has conducted anti-oppression workshops with the youths and adult gardeners to break down barriers and biases between these two groups that harm community mobilization. This work is then channeled into the farmers markets, which operate as intergenerational spaces where youths and adults regularly interact. Therefore, if funders are indeed invested in supporting the efforts of ENYF! to build intergenerational power, they need to address the ageism of their grant practices that marginalizes elders.

ENYF!'s funding problem is not just that grants are program-centric but that such grant structures tend to reinforce a fetish for new projects rather than supporting existing programs that are integral to the organization's long-term vision. "Funders that love to fund new projects and new initiatives—that can be really challenging if you are trying to build a strong foundation for what you are already doing. It can divide your time and energy," acknowledged Deborah Greig, agriculture director at ENYF!. "Talking to funders about the benefits of funding existing programs is important: having funders understand that organizations want to support the programs that are successful and proven and that staff have taken time to develop, that jumping into a new funding stream because a funder is interested in it might not actually be the best thing for the organization in terms of its development." The problem Greig outlines has been a recurring one for ENYF!, with Daftary-Steel having to work very hard to piece together short-term program grants that fit with the mission of the organization. "You have to apply every year, and there is always pressure to say that

you are doing something new. That is a really hard balance," admitted Daftary-Steel. She continued:

> But I have not been willing to [say] "We are going to do this this year and we are going to do this this year" just because there is funding for it. Our program is our program, and I will bust my butt to make sure we get funding for what it is—what it truly is at its core—and not try to [say], "We are going to do this and then we are going to do that." I see a lot of other organizations doing that to continue to fund themselves, but I cannot imagine us [ENYF!] having any respect or integrity within the community or having as much success as we have had if it was, "This year we are working with eleven-year-olds, but next year we are going to be working with disconnected youth and only youth whose parents are formerly incarcerated." That is not the way a program makes sense to the community. The way it makes sense to the community is, "We work with kids who live in East New York or go to school in East New York."

To navigate the tension that exists between the mission of ENYF! and the funding priorities of foundations, ENYF! has developed the strategy of pilot programming. "We generally come from a frame of mind to find ways to pilot things and try things out on a smaller scale before we really launch into it and grow from there," explained Vigil. He continued:

> Our model tends to be to be, do it for a year, then tell funders that we are doing it, then write a grant for a larger support of that, and then fold it into our program. It really helps to have people who support us over multiple years so we can develop our strategy, as well as do that innovation, and that there is not this pressure to come up with and execute a brand-new program all in one year, because I do not think that is a recipe for success. The intense pressure to have ribbon cuttings, public events, and funder tours to make superficial headway in terms of "Well they built a farm and put some crops there," and prioritize that well ahead of the relationship building, the community building, and the planning that is really going to go into a successful program.

In this regard, multiyear grants and general operating support grants are integral to ENYF! being able to expand its capacity by having the ability to try out new things based on its own vision. This not only helps the organization stay true to its mission and generate community buy-in, but it also provides staff members with the time to flesh out the intricacies of a project, improve its effectiveness, and create a stronger grant application package to fund it in the future. Vigil's comment pushes us to think deeply about what counts as success for community-based organizations and underscores the fact that this may look different from the funder's point of view than it does from that of the

potential funded organization. Success for the community-based organization is often measured less by the ribbon cuttings and press releases and more by the deep relationships being cultivated through food among staff members, gardeners, and residents.

Another problem that ENYF! encounters when engaging with funders entails divergent framings of social change between the two. "I think that in this data-driven world we are in, the value of a small local organization tends to be underrated," emphasized Vigil, "and sometimes funders are more concerned with the total number of people that you are seeing and not how you do the work because they are under pressure from their boards and the culture in general to show results. And that is generally an issue for us."

Greig also spoke about the problem of devaluing qualitative change at the community level:

> One example I am dealing with is how to explain to people that food poundage is not the way to approach production. For instance, on a basic level two pounds of spinach is a lot of food, but it does not seem like it when you put it on the spreadsheet. In looking at that spreadsheet, you are not getting a clear idea of what an acre is able to produce in a nonprofit situation by looking at poundage. We need to think about and look at how the value of this land is larger than that, think about the lives of students who have come through the program or how people in the community have been positively impacted by the farmers market, to kind of try and shift the funders' mentality so that food poundage is not this thing that shows whether you are successful or not.

In trying to shift funders' views beyond poundage and quantitative notions of output, ENYF! tries to focus attention on how people's lives are fundamentally changed through access to land and the ability to grow food, revitalize cultural practices, and strengthen community relations—qualities that are much more intangible than poundage yet vitally important to the success of community food systems oriented toward social justice.

Attempting to shift the narrative of urban agriculture is becoming all the more important for ENYF! given the prevailing belief among funders that urban agriculture is about making money. According to Greig,

> Urban agriculture has gotten really sexy. It has gotten more notice in terms of funders' interest, and there is a base level of education that some funders do not quite understand—which is that it is not a for-profit thing to do what we are doing. In the long term, you are building people's own economic viability and building people's skills, trying to shift where people spend their money. But you are not going to make money. And as people start touting urban agriculture as the next big thing, that is just something funders do not want to hear. They

> want to know that this is something that ideally could be self-sustaining. But you are not going to make money when you are working with thirty teenagers on an acre of land. That is just not economically possible. Talking to folks about urban agriculture not as money, a financial boon, or a growth area is needed.

Greig's critique of funders' expectations for urban agriculture is important for two reasons. First, it challenges the belief that urban agriculture can be economically competitive with rural farmers growing food on a hundred or even a thousand acres. Second, it challenges the belief that urban agriculture should be understood primarily as an entrepreneurial or market-driven activity. While many funding organizations may be focused on the market potential of urban agriculture, ENYF! frames urban agriculture as a path to challenging racial inequities. "We are telling a story not just about food but about our community in general," said Vigil. He continued:

> So when we have people here taking a tour of the farm, we talk a lot about the history of structural racism, the history of white flight and redlining in East New York, and the many ways that has affected our community. That is the story that we have decided to tell about our work, because if you overly focus on food you miss the real root causes. Racism and inequality are so embedded in our world that if you say, "Well, we are trying to fix it in the food system" but are not talking about how it impacts all of the other components of our lives, than we are kind of missing the point. We see food as a building point for developing the community solidarity to address those larger issues, because you cannot stop with food.

Fortunately for ENYF!, the framing of urban agriculture as a path toward racial justice is not lost on nor alienating to all funders. According to Daftary-Steel, a small number of funders:

> Get that in the food justice movement urban agriculture is really about recruitment. The thing about urban agriculture is that it is going to generate some food production, some income, but it is not designed to be the solution in itself. We do not think that we are going to produce all the food that East New York needs in urban gardens. However, it is something that is very visual, very engaging, that people can see happening in their community, and that sort of starts that involvement and conversation around food justice issues. The funders that are realistic about it see urban agriculture as the organizing piece that gets people in cities involved.

The funders who understand that urban agriculture is about consciousness-raising, cultivating residents' voices, and facilitating community empowerment

are the organizations that ENYF! attempts to works with as much as possible, but such funders are in the minority. As a result, ENYF! has pursued but ultimately had to turn down funding offers because they did not end up meshing well with the makeup and purpose of the organization. One instance stood out for Daftary-Steel, involving a foundation for an energy company that was interested in supporting ENYF!'s youth program. The foundation suggested, "Maybe we could call it the Energy Company Youth Program."[4] Daftary-Steel recounted that she was very clear in her thinking: "No, we are not going to call it the Energy Company Youth Program. That would never make sense in any situation. You are giving us potentially $25,000 dollars, the youth program costs over $150,000 a year to run, and then you are committing to this for one year—why would we name it after you?"

Naming is about claiming voice and ownership, and the foundation's attempt to do so was a problem for Daftary-Steel. Not only was the funding small and short-term, but using the funder's name ignored all the years of labor that ENYF! had invested in building up the youth program, as well as all the other foundations that had contributed to growing the program over the years. Additionally, such a quid pro quo by the foundation misunderstood the mission of ENYF! and the goal of the youth program. "The goal" of the youth program, said Vigil, is to have youths "learn more about themselves, their community, and the world at large through a lens of food and food justice. We look at East New York and ask, why are there so many vacant lots? Why are there all these diet-related diseases? Why are these waves of immigration coming from the Global South? We can use food as a great medium to discuss those things."[5]

Through making such connections, ENYF! youths learn "that urban agriculture in East New York rose out of a painful history of racial discrimination, disinvestment, and urban decline. With this historical background they can better understand the significance of gardens as a source of pride."[6] At its core, the ENYF! youth program is about creating the next generation of leaders from and for East New York. It is about using a social justice framework to transform what East New York is and how East New Yorkers see themselves. This standpoint of putting East New York youths first has restricted the sources of funding that ENYF! has access to, but there is a bright side to this story. After numerous conversations between the Energy Company Foundation and ENYF!, in which ENYF! staff members clearly communicated their food justice politics, the organization received grants from the foundation—funds that were not connected with having to rename the youth program.

This experience indicates how ENYF! staff members have developed numerous strategies to help the organization stay true to its mission while navigating the limits of philanthropic funding structures. These strategies include being conscious about their organization's mission, pursuing smaller grants and a diverse range of grants related to urban agriculture, piloting and scaling up

existing programs, educating funders about the need to fund salaries and existing programs, and emphasizing to funders that urban agriculture oriented toward social justice is about community building, not profit. Despite these strategies, staff members still spend a lot of their time chasing short-term programmatic grants, time that would be better used on the ground building their programs and pursuing their organization's long-term goals.

Philanthropy and Social Movements: A Struggle between Recuperation and Liberation

The funding barriers that ENYF! encounters are unfortunately not unique to it or the food justice movement: numerous organizations across many different social justice movements have faced obstacles due to the ideology, politics, and structures of philanthropy. Scholarship on the relationship between social movements and philanthropic foundations has found that foundations are generally conservative in form and shy away from causes deemed political, and when foundations do fund social movements, they may have a deradicalizing influence.[7] For instance, most foundations that supported the civil rights movement were reactive rather than proactive and did not fund organizations until after the movement had already "gained a degree of public acceptance and political legitimacy" as well as achieved "legislative gains."[8] The clearest example of this is that while foundations were initially hesitant to fund the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Legal Defense and Educational Fund, they did eventually do so and to a great extent. However, this change was connected to the shift of movement energy from litigation to nonviolent collective action and from civil rights to Black Power—and with it to the Southern Christian Leadership Council, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.[9]

The processes shaping the rise in funding for moderate civil rights organizations in the 1960s can be understood through the twin concepts of radical flank effects and channeling. The term "radical flank effects" refers to the influence that the radicalization of social movements can have on their funding structures, talking points, organizational strategies, and political achievements.[10] Radical flank effects can be positive, including the embrace of moderate organizations and their demands by elites because they appear to be more acceptable and less threatening than the demands of radicals. Another positive effect can be the mainstreaming of the discourses, tactics, and demands of the radical groups throughout the movement and society at large. Both of these can lead to political wins for the movement. Radical flank effects can be negative, too. For example, they can discredit moderate groups or lead to a decline in funding for moderate groups because of their association with radical groups

that are labeled by the mainstream media, conservatives, elite, and government as violent, terrorists, or communists. Another negative effect can be the polarization of the broader movement, or the driving away of moderates from the movement, due to the discourses, tactics, and demands of the radical groups. Both situations may diminish the overall power of a movement and therefore its efficacy in realizing social change.

The concept of channeling is connected to the idea of radical flank effects and refers to a particular practice of foundations that often occurs in response to the radicalization of social movements. In this practice, funds are targeted to the more moderate wings of a movement to curtail the power and demands of radical groups and thereby shape the movement's trajectory in a manner that is more palatable to the ideological leanings of the elite.[11] In relation to the civil rights movement, channeling entailed pushing "gradualism over militancy, litigation and legislation over protest, [and] individual and group access to the benefits of the existing political and economic system over structural reform."[12] This took the form of funding organizations that emphasized legal defense, voting rights, public interest law, and policy analysis, as well as programs for social services and job training.[13] That focus increased the likelihood that foundation funds would not be given to grassroots organizing and movement building that prioritized social transformation but instead to professional movement organizations that engaged in advocacy on behalf of marginalized groups or provided technical support to them. Therefore, while channeling can popularize and strengthen the more moderate demands of a movement by integrating it within the larger social system, this may be at the cost of isolating the movement from its grassroots base and transformative demands—which often has depoliticizing consequences over the long term.

The conservatism of foundation funding is a problem that continues to shape social movements today. In the 2010s, only 21 percent of foundation grant dollars was provided in the form of general operating support, 16 percent as multiyear support, and a mere 10 percent for "social justice strategies."[14] These figures are far below what the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy recommends.[15] To achieve "Philanthropy at Its Best," the committee recommends that grant makers provide 50 percent of their grant dollars for general operational support; 50 percent for multiyear support; and 25 percent for equity and justice-based advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement.[16] Such conservative funding practices are not universal among foundations. Rather, they predominate at liberal, corporate, and progressive foundations, with ideologically conservative foundations actually funding general operating support at much higher rates—a strategy that has been very effective in building the infrastructure of conservative movement organizations and their ability to exert influence over public debate and policy making at local, state, and national levels of government.[17]

Why then do so many liberal, corporate, and progressive foundations not provide general operating funds to organizations in the social justice movement? According to Stephen Viederman, former president of the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, this is because foundations and their donors do not know about the "organizing needs" of marginalized communities because they "listen too little" and "have little or no public accountability" that would push them in this direction.[18] Consequently, they "do not seem to be aware of the fact that the shortage of funds available for community organizing weakens the base of any movement."[19] For Michael Shuman, former director of the Institute for Policy Studies, the lack of funder accountability to marginalized communities emerges from whose interests the foundations represent: "Given that many of the large foundations are founded and run by the corporate elite, no one should be surprised that most are ambivalent toward the left and are undependable supporters of activists' work. . . . In a class struggle, can the owners and dispensers of capital really be trusted to finance their own overthrow?"[20] In short, if liberal, corporate, and progressive donors were to switch to the model of providing general operating support, as conservatives have done, they would in effect be transferring power to social justice movements and their organizations—and since this transfer of power is perceived as a threat to the elite, it does not occur. As a result, upper-class people have an inordinate amount of power over social movements even though they are not on the ground "bringing about change," are not "suffer[ing] the oppressive circumstances that social movement groups work to alter," and are not "benefit[ing] directly from the change" when social movements win.[21]

Recognizing the limits of philanthropy, organizations based in social movements have tried replacing foundation dollars with funds from members and consumers so that they can control their organizations and movements. In the food justice movement, this effort has often taken the form of selling produce or services to affluent communities at higher prices and using these funds to pay for employment programs, educational programs, and subsidized produce prices for working-class communities of color. Two well-known organizations using this model are Growing Power in Milwaukee (now defunct) and Planting Justice in Oakland.[22] This shift toward nonprofit social enterprise, which blends the market-based practices of businesses with the social good practices of nonprofit organizations, is significant for movement organizations in its acknowledgment that the ability of marginalized communities to build spaces of power to counter those of the existing social system requires control over the production, appropriation, and distribution of income and wealth.[23]

At the same time, the desire to become financially self-sustaining is not driven solely by people within the food justice movement: it is increasingly an expectation among funders that believe that food-oriented community-based organizations should be a bit more entrepreneurial and generate a portion of

the funds they need through the sale of some product—be it produce, renting out their space for events, or running a consulting service. The entrepreneurial push from funders is something that ENYF! has encountered in seeking grants. "There are definitely funders that propose those ideas," explained Daftary-Steel. "For instance, [they ask] 'What if you were doing rooftop farming to generate more income?' Every source of funding you apply for, it is very common now for them to ask about financial sustainability and self-funding." When I asked why she thought that rooftop farms were getting a lot of attention in the funding community even when they do not make sense for an organization such as ENYF!, Daftary-Steel responded, "It comes down to the bias of a huge one-time cost versus ongoing costs. You are going to sink hundreds of thousands of dollars into a rooftop farm once, that is then seen as sustainable since it is supposed to fund itself."

In this regard, the popularity of funding rooftop farms is due in part to the farms' fit within the short-term, project-based grant structure of foundations as well as their preference for entrepreneurial approaches—both of which avoid the long-term funding obligations that may be needed by ground-level community gardeners who are growing food principally for their own use to eat, give away, and generate independent income. This one-time cost model is also concerning because it tends to privilege funding for urban farming organizations run by middle- and upper-class white people who have the political, economic, and cultural power, as well as the desire, to secure funding for rooftop projects, many of which lack a social justice orientation.[24] Daftary-Steel's statement underscores the fact that we need to ask deeper questions about how and why foundations are privileging for-profit and market-oriented practices when community-based organizations oriented toward social justice often form to address the inequities emerging from the for-profit and market-oriented practices of racial capitalism.

The push toward nonprofit social enterprise raises a larger issue for Daftary-Steel as well: whether community-based organizations are supposed to become profitable businesses. "If that is the case, then those organizations should be going for business loans, not foundation money. Those are two separate things," Daftary-Steel said. "We subsidize a lot of things. Oil is subsidized. Why not subsidize community programs that are geared towards increasing access to fresh food?" The entrepreneurial push experienced by ENYF! reflects a presumption that nonprofit organizations could and should become market-oriented and self-financing, even though most for-profit businesses rely on significant public subsidies for their profitability.[25] From Daftary-Steel's perspective, subsidies are vital to the food justice work of ENYF!, and without them the organization would have to dramatically scale back its projects and programs—which would negatively affect East New Yorkers. Therefore, Daftary-Steel's unease about the push toward entrepreneurialism reflects a

concern about whether nonprofit social enterprise will become seen as the model, rather than just a model, for community-based nonprofits. Will foundations start to provide funds to community-based nonprofits only if they have a sound business plan, one that demonstrates how they will fully fund themselves or generate a certain percentage of their funds after so many years in operation? If this is the case, organizations may not be considered viable for funding in the first place if they are not performing enough commercial activities, and organizations that are unable to generate enough funds on their own after a certain number of years may not receive future funding and be forced to shut down. Such a funding structure continues to ignore the fact that urban agriculture oriented toward social justice is not primarily about making money, for both ideological and practical reasons, but rather about building power.

In addition to the problem of treating community-based nonprofits as if they were entrepreneurial start-ups, Daftary-Steel is skeptical about whether nonprofit social enterprise is even economically feasible in the first place:

> I have a slightly different opinion on this than everyone else, meaning not our staff but the rest of the world. In terms of being able to do some for-profit activity that then subsidizes other nonprofit activity, that is really hard, and I think a lot of people who say they are doing that are sort of fudging it. For example, running a farm as a straight-up business is hard enough, so the idea that you would run a farm that is so amazingly profitable that it can also subsidize produce at below-market prices and educational activities and job training—that is really hard to picture.[26]

Daftary-Steel's critical take on nonprofit social enterprise is shaped by her decade-long experience at ENYF!, as well as her firsthand encounters with this model:

> A place like Growing Power that does a lot of entrepreneurial activity in addition to food access work—you cannot really do that at the same time . . . , or at least in the same activity, as you are addressing food access. The way that they are able to generate some of their own income is selling micro-greens at $20 a pound. That can be an opportunity for them or even a person from the community to earn income, but it has no real relationship to broader food access. That is just straight-up expensive greens for people who can afford them, and that comes to about half a million dollars a year. You say that and people are like, "Wow!" But they do a ton of other work, and their budget is way more than half a million dollars. The micro-greens are not funding all their activities. That is just really hard to do.

Daftary-Steel also spoke of another example:

> We went to visit this greenhouse in New Jersey that does a lot of high-tech hydroponic production as well as job training for people who are disabled and people who are formerly incarcerated, and they were saying, "We sell some things at a higher price and that subsidizes this other stuff." Well, it sounds awesome, and I asked her to give me some numbers about their sales and costs. And when I added them up, their for-profit stuff, the high-end stuff, was barely paying for itself. There is no way it was subsidizing the job training programs, the education programs, and selling food below [the] market price.

Based on Daftary-Steel's insights, it appears that while nonprofit social enterprises may be able to generate some of an organization's funds through market activities, they probably cannot create large-scale autonomy from foundations. Moreover, given that many small farmers are having a hard time getting by merely growing food, it is impractical to expect nonprofit food justice organizations to be able to sell enough high-end produce to fund salaries, run educational and employment programs, and offer subsidized produce to working-class residents. According to Daftary-Steel, "to expect an organization in a hugely underresourced community to be able to generate our own funds or even a significant part [of our budget] when we are running programs for that hugely underresourced community is a really unrealistic expectation." Growing Power's declaration of bankruptcy in November 2017 appears to confirm some of Daftary-Steel's suspicions about nonprofit social enterprise. The organization folded after twelve years, and its financial records showed that it owed close to half a million dollars to creditors and had run significant deficits from 2012 to 2015, often in excess of two million dollars a year.[27]

Therefore, despite significant interest in nonprofit social enterprise by funders and people in the food movement, ENYF! staff members do not think that this model is necessarily a game changer for their organization. In fact, they believe that adopting this model would be detrimental to realizing their organizational mission. Daftary-Steel said:

> As nice as it would be to not have to write grants, I am not going to trick myself into thinking that that is not going to happen. For example, if we took everything we grew at the UCC Youth Farm and quadrupled the price, we might generate $30,000, and our budget is around half a million. So we would have abandoned our mission, taken land out of production for our community, grown food that was no longer available to anyone in our community, and in return have $30,000 to show for it. It is hard for us to imagine that produce

> sales to wealthy consumers would ever be a much bigger part of our income and that we would still be consistent with our mission. Especially since land is limited, any land that we have needs to be in production for our community.

This assertion of who the land is for and how it needs to be used to realize the mission of ENYF! has led the organization to be very direct and intentional about what type of projects it is going to be involved in. "When I go and speak on panels, people act like what I am saying is so revolutionary, but this is not rocket science," Daftary-Steel commented. She continued:

> However, I think a lot of people sugarcoat things, and I do not and we [ENYF!] do not. We will [say], "No, rooftop farms are not really going to work here. No, we are not going to sell our food to a fancy restaurant. We do not do that." We are very clear about what we are not going do and what we are going to do and what is our mission, which has allowed us to be really focused on building up our program and work that is going to increase access to fresh food in our neighborhood and involve empowerment and leadership development for people in our community. If it does not hit both of those, then it is not really for us.

While some food justice organizations might be able to incorporate selling expensive greens into their economic model in a way that blends community empowerment, job creation, and revenue generation, this is not how ENYF! is organized. Consequently, the desire by foundations for ENYF! to adopt such an economic model is where the ideological threat of nonprofit social enterprise is strongest as well, since it creates the belief that the shift from foundations to foodies can be a win for the movement when instead it may have a deradicalizing influence. First, this economic model pushes organizations away from power building and producing food by and for the community in favor of adopting a business model catering to affluent communities. Second, the model rejects peoples' right to food and embraces what I call a trickle-down food politics, in which the consumption choices of upper- and middle-class households are what create food access for working-class households. For both of these reasons, if the expensive greens model does become the only model for food justice organizations, it will probably reinforce the reformist and neoliberal politics of the food movement by channeling energy toward food access projects and market-centric solutions and away from the necessary work of mobilizing people to redistribute power, income, wealth, and land—a process that is vital to addressing inequitable food relations.

Realizing the Affirmative State: Creating Funding Structures Rooted in Social Justice

Right now, the food justice movement relies on the generosity of foundations for funds because that is where the wealth is. Yet many of the more transformative organizations in the movement have discourses, tactics, and goals that are not generally palatable to the foundation elite because they contest racial capitalism, the carceral state, white supremacy, gentrification, urban growth machines, Big Food, and Big Ag. This situation may lead to a dearth of funding for such organizations, which is why there is an immediate need to move beyond the conventional philanthropic funding structures that exist in opposition to just sustainabilities. At the bare minimum, foundations need to heed the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's criteria for "Philanthropy at Its Best" and provide funding for general operating support, multiyear support, and equity-based organizing. Foundations also need to adopt a practice from the Haymarket People's Fund and create grantmaking boards that are composed of social movement activists rather than professional staff members.[28] Each of these changes would play a part in shifting power relations within philanthropy away from foundations and toward marginalized communities.

An even better way to fund food justice organizations would be through public funds generated by the redistribution of wealth from the upper class to the working class. This idea is something that Daftary-Steel put forth when discussing the power of philanthropy:

> Because people do not pay enough taxes, rich people donate to what they want to. Rather than hoping that rich people are generous and start donations, it is better overall for people to pay more in taxes, for that is a systematic way for people to redistribute money. I read that some rich person donated $40 million dollars to build a velodrome in Brooklyn Bridge Park, when day cares all across New York City are having to close due to budget cuts and working-class parents are having to worry about "What do I do with my kid all day?" Child care is something that deserves $40 million dollars. A velodrome, we could wait [for].

Daftary-Steel's velodrome example highlights how the largesse of the wealthy, which intensifies existing inequities, is possible because of the elite's antitax, anti-equity, and antidemocratic politics. In this respect, Daftary-Steel's critique of philanthropy is tied to her belief that the entire population, not just the wealthy, should decide the distribution of wealth between public and private purposes as well as the distribution of wealth among the classes. If this

were the case, then the distribution of wealth in the United States (based on a quintile system that divides the population into five equally sized groups) would be closer to the public's ideal, in which the upper class own 32 percent of the nation's wealth, the upper-middle class own 23 percent, the middle class own 19 percent, the lower-middle class own 15 percent, and the lower class own 11 percent.[29] However, given that the United States is plutocratic and that economic and political power is concentrated at the top of the class structure, the elite ends up having an inordinate influence over the distribution of wealth.[30] The result is a structure of wealth distribution in which the upper class own 84.0 percent of the nation's wealth, the upper-middle class own 11 percent, the middle class own only 4.0 percent, the lower-middle class own 0.2 percent, and the lower class own a mere 0.1 percent.[31]

It is this inequitable distribution of wealth and power that creates a world in which velodromes for the upper class are funded but child care for the working class is not. Tax policy is central to this inequitable distribution of wealth—specifically, a tax structure that shifts more and more of the socially produced wealth away from working- and middle-class communities and into the private estates of the elite and the upper class.[32] For instance, the top personal income tax rate at the federal level was around 91 percent from 1951 to 1963, but by 2020 it was a mere 37 percent due to massive tax cuts during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump.[33] Corporate tax rates at the federal level have also declined from a high of 52 percent in the 1950s and 1960s to 21 percent in 2020.[34] Compounding these tax cuts are tax credits and tax deductions for the upper class, including tax deductions for mortgage interest, charitable donations, and certain gifts; tax-deferred retirement plans; and estate-tax exemptions, all of which cost state and federal governments hundreds of billions of dollars a year.[35]

Even with all these ways to reduce their tax responsibility to society, the elite use tax havens and tax shelters to pay as little in taxes (and therefore accumulate as much wealth) as possible.[36] While people often think of offshore accounts in Switzerland, Luxembourg, or the Cayman Islands when they hear the term "tax haven," philanthropic foundations—created when private estates are turned into nonprofit entities—are actually a common example of a tax shelter for the elite. Such foundations deprive the public of billions in tax revenue, which is a major reason why the elite create such foundations in the first place.[37] Additionally, as the elite have used tax policy to defund public institutions, magnify social inequities, reduce equal opportunity, and solidify social immobility, they have presented philanthropy (and thus their private interests and ideas) as the solution for these structural problems.[38] In this respect, philanthropy is a form of self-promotion for the capitalist class that operates to legitimate their plutocratic existence and fend off calls from the public for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and power.

Daftary-Steel wholeheartedly rejects the legitimacy of philanthropy and its claims that the elite can solve the problems of working-class communities and communities of color. Instead, she contends that the United States needs a much more progressive tax structure to meet social needs, one that links procedural equity to substantive and distributive equity and curtails the power of the wealthy. Realizing such a vision is politically feasible: it just requires the formation of a broad-based coalition of social justice movements that are able to legitimate the idea of the affirmative state among the populace, facilitate the public's mobilization on behalf of it, and usher it into existence.[39] One way that the food justice movement could do this is through reframing how people conceptualize democracy, freedom, and taxes.[40]

Democracy in the United States is often confined to the electoral politics of voting for representatives who generally compete with each other over how best to fuel economic competition, increase private investment, and accelerate economic growth—in short, how they will meet the needs of capitalism and the capitalist class. This narrow conception of democracy is problematic in two ways. First, it delegitimates the voices of marginalized groups whose members are alienated or blocked from meaningful participation in the electoral structures of government. This alienation and marginalization then pushes them to form social movements to get their voices heard by elected representatives, mobilizations that are then framed by those in power as illegitimate because they engage in extra-electoral politics.[41] Second, it limits the ability of the public to address social inequities in the United States via the state because the state is denied the power to intervene in the capitalist economy to prioritize any values, needs, and desires other than the pursuit of profit.[42] Both of these issues have played a role in structuring the United States as a plutocracy, one in which electoral funds are disproportionately from the upper class, and the political viability of candidates, their talking points, and their policies are shaped in large part by their ability to appeal to the economic interests of the wealthy.[43]

The food justice movement could bring this contradiction to the surface through articulating the ideas that democracy (the rule of the people) and capitalism (the rule of the bourgeoisie) are two separate things, that democracy needs to be decoupled from the rule of capital, and that a democratic society entails all people having input in and control over the economic system. The movement could make the case that in a democracy, all people have the power to make collective decisions about how society is going to be organized—which includes how markets are going to be configured; what goods and services the government, community-based organizations, and for-profit corporations are going to provide to residents; and how income and wealth are to be distributed. Such a vision of democracy is one that is not necessarily representative in form either: instead, it is participatory and could operate in numerous ways to decentralize decision-making power to share it more equally with working-class

communities and communities of color, a process that could reduce upper class domination of the government.[44] Ongoing participatory budgeting projects in California, New York, Washington, Connecticut, and Illinois, which empower marginalized communities in allocating public funds, could be models for the food justice movement to use when articulating this version of participatory democracy to the public.[45]

Such a reframing of democracy would simultaneously entail reframing how many people conceptualize freedom, understanding it not as negative freedom (freedom from) but as positive freedom (freedom to).[46] Negative freedom presumes that people's freedom is based on preventing government intervention into people's lives—for example, limiting regulations, laws, and taxes, because people are considered free when they are left alone to do as they please. Positive freedom presumes that peoples' freedom is based on the government providing infrastructure, programs, and resources that meet social needs, for if people are not guaranteed a certain quality of life, they are unable to realize any of the rights, liberties, and possibilities afforded by custom or law. These two conceptions of freedom reflect fundamentally different ways of approaching the world. Negative freedom embraces personal responsibility and individual self-sufficiency, while positive freedom embraces collective responsibility and interdependency. Negative freedom presumes that the primary job of government is to protect capitalist private property, while positive freedom contends that the primary job of government is to secure the social and economic welfare of residents. For over fifty years, negative freedom has dominated cultural politics in the United States and created a state that forces residents to fend for themselves, leaving them at the mercy of capitalist actors. Mainstreaming the concept of positive freedom could push back against the despotism of capitalist freedom and open up space for revitalizing democratic freedom, freeing people from having to worry about meeting their basic needs through the market and allowing them instead to devote their time to pursuing a meaningful life, however they define it.

The reframing of democracy and freedom will also require the reframing of how people conceptualize taxes, for the three are intimately linked. Since the 1970s the national debate over taxes has been dominated by the Right through the language of tax relief, language that has legitimated the tax cuts and austerity politics of racial neoliberalism and created an acceptance of the false belief that lower taxes equal more freedom.[47] In the 1990s and 2000s, this anti-tax politics even infected the Democratic Party, which adopted the talking points that Big Government and welfare (for the working class) were bad and tax cuts for the middle class were good—ideas that align with conservative beliefs in negative freedom and subordinating democracy to capitalism.[48]

Challenging the hegemony of "taxes as bad" is integral to realizing Daftary-Steel's vision for a more progressive tax system. According to the cognitive

linguist George Lakoff, this is possible. It just requires the creation of new linguistic pairings that highlight how taxes are "investments" or "membership fees" that improve everyone's quality of life.[49] These are metaphors that Lakoff uses to make his point, and there are many others that could be created to communicate the message of "taxes as good." Slogans such as "taxes build the American Dream," "taxes build wealth," "taxes build economic security," and "taxes build parks" would highlight how the government creates public goods through taxation, while phrases like "taxes reduce hunger," "taxes reduce poverty," and "taxes keep our air and water clean" would emphasize how the government reduces public bads through taxation. Historically, taxes have played an important role in creating structures that facilitate economic security and social mobility, from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Social Security to Medicaid and Medicare and to Pell Grants and subsidized tuition at public colleges and universities. Without taxes the basic infrastructure of society would not exist, as the government could not provide public libraries, public parks, garbage collection, fire protection, health care, public transportation, and a public infrastructure for private transportation. Without taxes there would also be no internet, computers, cell phones, GPS, microwaves, and satellites, not to mention the fact that most innovations in medical science are based on publicly funded research.

To be successful in achieving this reframing of taxes as a public good, the food justice movement would need to tell stories that do at least three things. First, they would have to remind people how taxes have benefited their lives and how tax cuts have harmed their lives. Second, they would need to fuse the dreams that people have for themselves, their families, and their communities to the creation of a more progressive tax structure and more democratic control over the political and economic spheres of society. Third, they would have to connect people's support for tax reform and participatory democracy to advocacy on behalf of policies, programs, candidates, and parties that would turn this dream into a reality. Overall, through generating "new popular beliefs" and "a new common sense" about democracy, freedom, and taxation, the food justice movement could build the discursive and political power necessary for communities of color to gain control over the public sphere in the United States and with it the ability to achieve an affirmative state that would redistribute power and wealth to meet social needs.[50]

Conclusion: Funding Food Justice

In prioritizing procedural equity in its food justice work, ENYF! has encountered numerous obstacles in securing grant funding that aligns with its organizational mission. This is because philanthropic funding is structured by funders that favor short-term programmatic grants over funding for staff

salaries and believe that food justice is primarily about quantitative output and making money. Given these barriers, ENYF! has used several strategies to secure funding while staying true to its mission. For example, it has pursued smaller grants, used program diversity to diversify its grant pool, and taught funders that general operating support is key to its long-term success and that urban agriculture is about community building.

Despite this work, ENYF! continues to encounter a funding environment that pushes urban agriculture organizations toward food-based entrepreneurialism and the goal of self-funding. As a result, there is a strong possibility that food justice organizations may be pushed away from a transformative food justice politics in favor of a reformist or neoliberal food politics. To prevent this from happening, transformative food justice organizations need more funding in the form of general operating support so that they can create their own programming and projects. This chapter discussed the possibility of realizing this goal by making the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes—an objective whose achievement is dependent on the movement's ability to reframe how the public conceptualizes democracy, freedom, and taxes and to link the dreams and desires of people with a political project to create an affirmative state.

If successful, this political project could shift wealth and power toward grassroots organizations and thereby challenge the racial, ethnic, and class inequities that permeate society. This shift in wealth and power would be very beneficial to ENYF! as it attempts to strengthen food assistance programs at farmers markets, expand food production in the community through new urban farms, and contest the gentrification of East New York. The need for such a political project became particularly apparent for ENYF! in the early 2010s, when Walmart started to promote itself as the solution to the social, economic, and food-based inequities in East New York—a claim that was contested by community-based organizations, elected representatives, unions, and ENYF! The conflict over who is best positioned to address the inequities facing East New Yorkers takes center stage in chapter 6.

6

Addressing Inequities in Grocery Retailing

Cheap Food versus High-Road Jobs

In March 2012, a community forum called "Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids" was held in UCC's gym. The forum brought together parents, students, other community members, and elected representatives to discuss food issues in the public schools of East New York. Throughout the evening those in attendance expressed their frustrations with school food, debated the merits of ongoing projects to remedy these concerns, and proposed further changes to the food system in public schools. Parents spoke about their children not having any alternatives to pizza, chicken nuggets, burgers, and mozzarella sticks in school—the same choices that dominated food outlets in their neighborhoods. Students described school food as icky, cold, and gross, with one student going so far as to say she "would rather starve than eat school food." Instead of food loaded with salt, sugar, and saturated fat, students and parents wanted healthier food: they desired salads, vegetables, vegetarian options, culturally appropriate options, and alternatives to milk and soda. Parents spoke about how students in Park Slope, a wealthier and whiter community in western Brooklyn, had access to soy milk, vegetarian options, juice, and water, and asked why their children did not have the same choices.

Explicit within the critiques of residents was the conviction that while bad food may dominate their communities, they were not resigned to this fate. And

believing that better alternatives existed, they were not going to let this inequitable situation go unchallenged. This belief was a constant theme throughout the night and was stressed in particular by Charles Barron (a Democratic City Council member from East New York). When he reached the microphone, Barron thanked all those in attendance for coming, as well as ENYF! and UCC for all the work they are doing for the community. He then launched into his speech: "Far too often when you travel through low-income communities like ours, you see McDonald's and fast food. This fast food is killing us, creating obesity and diabetes. When you walk around, get off the subway, all you see is fast food. Michelle Obama might be right about food, but she is wrong about Walmart. We want jobs and work that allows [*sic*] you to unionize, have a pension, [get] a living wage—there is nothing better than a living wage!" Cheers and applause rang out from those in attendance. Barron had struck a chord with the audience, one underscoring the fact that food inequities are about more than geographic access to food: they are connected to the quality of jobs available to residents.

This chapter builds on Barron's comments about Obama, Walmart, and food justice by detailing how East New York became front and center in a nationwide conflict over how to frame and address inequities in grocery retailing. On one side is the Obama-Walmart alliance that privileges low-road jobs and supply-side economics as the solution to the lack of geographic access to grocery stores. On the other side is what Joshua Sbicca and I have called the Good Food, Good Jobs (GFGJ) coalition that emphasizes high-road jobs and demand-side economics as the solution to the problem of racialized economic inequality.[1] This conflict is important because the winner has the potential to shape how the public understands inequitable food relations and the political projects and economic policies that are created by municipal, state, and federal governments to address these inequities. This chapter documents how food justice activism in East New York was successful in challenging the growth machine politics of Walmart by mobilizing people around a vision of high-road jobs for all—jobs at companies that offer living wages, stable schedules, job security, the right to bargain collectively, and health and retirement benefits, and have provisions for local hiring—since without good jobs, East New Yorkers will not be able to put good food on the table.

Walmart's Urban Turn: Leveraging Food Desert Discourse to Facilitate Economic Growth

In 2012 the USDA claimed that 23.5 million people in the United States, or 8.4 percent of the total population, lived in food deserts, which the USDA defined as "a *low-income* census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has *low access* to a supermarket or large grocery store."[2] This

definition emphasizes both the problems of economic barriers (low incomes) and geographic barriers (low access) that are seen to constitute a food desert, but it also circumscribes these barriers within the visibility of census tracts and people's physical distance from supermarkets and large grocery stores.[3] The outcome of such a frame and its constant articulation by the USDA, public health officials, scholars, and the nonprofit community is a national bias that has centered the debate about food inequities on how to close the grocery gap, even though research has found that such a narrow geographic frame does not accurately capture whether residents have geographic and/or economic access to fresh produce.[4]

Despite research critical of these geographic-centric concepts and their associated politics, nonprofit organizations; for-profit entities; and municipal, state, and federal governments have created numerous public-private partnerships to provide incentives (subsidies) to grocery stores and supermarkets to locate in underserved areas. These partnerships include Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative, New York State's Healthy Food, Healthy Communities Fund, and the federal government's Healthy Food Financing Initiative.[5] Michelle Obama's work when she was First Lady was indicative of this national trend, as she leveraged USDA food desert data, her "Let's Move" initiative against childhood obesity, and her position as honorary chair of the Partnership for a Healthier America to secure commitments from grocery retailers to either open or expand 1,500 stores in communities designated as food deserts.[6] Walmart, Walgreens, and SuperValu were three of the largest grocery chains to agree to such commitments. Walmart promised to open or expand grocery sections in 300 stores, which would serve over 800,000 people. Walgreens planned to bring healthy food to 4.8 million people by turning 1,000 of its stores into what it called food oasis stores, which will sell groceries, including fruits and vegetables. SuperValu said that it would open 250 new Save a Lot stores. In total, the regional and national commitments would bring produce to 9.5 million people who lived in food deserts, about 40 percent of that population in the United States.

The commitments were seen as a major win for "Let's Move," and Obama used the announcement to reinforce her work against childhood obesity and to eliminate geographic barriers to healthy eating:

> The commitments we're announcing today have the potential to be a game-changer for kids and communities all across this country. . . . We can give people all the information and advice in the world about healthy eating and exercise, but if parents can't buy the food they need to prepare those meals because their only options for groceries are the gas station or the local minimart, then all that is just talk. Let's Move is about giving parents real choices about the food their kids are eating, and today's announcement means

> that more parents will have a fresh food retailer right in their community—a place that sells healthy food, at reasonable prices, so they can feed their families the way they want.[7]

Leslie Dach, executive vice president of corporate affairs at Walmart, praised the alliance with the First Lady: "By opening stores where customers need them most, Walmart will help build healthier families and stronger communities. We believe every single person should have access to an abundant selection of fresh fruits and vegetables at an affordable price. . . . First Lady Michelle Obama is helping millions of Americans lead healthier lives, and Walmart is proud to partner with her in this work. The First Lady's leadership on products, prices and access to healthier food has helped sharpen our focus on bringing affordable groceries to underserved urban and rural areas."[8] For Dach, fulfilling the potential of the Obama-Walmart alliance hinged on the ability of the company to extend its famous "everyday low price" business model to produce. A press release from Walmart announcing the Obama-Walmart alliance stated:

> Walmart's everyday low price business model will help make healthier food more affordable. The company will take a number of steps to provide customers even more savings on fresh produce through a variety of sourcing, pricing, and transportation and logistics initiatives that will drive efficiencies throughout the supply chain and further reduce unnecessary costs.[9]

The press release also claimed that if Walmart was successful in such efforts, it would save customers at Walmart over $1 billion annually on produce.[10]

The remarks of Michelle Obama and Walmart are significant because they acknowledge that not all people have equal access to fresh produce, this is a problem of price points and geographic access, and the physical environment of communities shapes what people eat. This turn away from informational access and to geographic access is an improvement over traditional public health attitudes in that it moves beyond a logic of individualism (which focuses solely on nutrition education) and toward embracing a social ecology of health approach (which emphasizes creating structures and built environments that enable people to consume healthy food).[11] In emphasizing the geographic dimensions of food access, Obama also made clear that state intervention into the grocery retailing market can help improve food access for working-class communities. At the same time, the neoliberal roots of such state intervention radiate through initiatives that rely on providing subsidies to private businesses to address a public bad and reject demand-side interventions to address the broader political and economic structures creating inequitable food relations. Such efforts raise serious concerns about how and why public subsidies are being used to secure corporate profits rather than residents' right to food.

While Walmart is a well-known proponent of probusiness policies, it is not clear at first glance why the company would align itself with a liberal Democrat and become invested in locating its stores in working-class urban communities, areas that chain grocery retailers have by and large fled since the 1960s.[12] But once you peer into the company's finances, it becomes clear that the urbanization of Walmart is a strategic maneuver to increase its profitability. The company was once a regional entity, but since the 1990s it has become the best-known face of the retail revolution, in which mass-market retailers have come to dominate the economic landscape alongside technology, energy, automobile, and finance companies.[13] Participants in this retail revolution include Costco, Target, Walgreens, and CVS, but Walmart stands apart from its competitors. It is the world's largest private employer, with over 2.2 million employees and 11,450 stores in twenty-eight countries, and since the bulk of its workforce (1.5 million people) and a significant number of its stores (5,355) are in the United States, it is the largest private employer in the nation as well.[14] The company has been such a success story that it has been number one on the Fortune 500 list for eighteen of the past twenty years.[15]

Walmart's history has not been all rosy, however. The company began to encounter growth troubles in the 2000s due to its saturation of rural and suburban markets, a problem that was amplified by the Great Recession and contributed to a decline in same-store sales from the first quarter of 2009 to the second quarter of 2011 (the year the Obama-Walmart alliance was announced).[16] As the company's supercenter growth strategy began to hit roadblocks, Walmart started to look at the urban retail market and rethink its model of over 200,000 square feet in supercenters, turning instead to stores of around 20,000 square feet. According to Neil Currie, executive director for UBS Securities, entering "urban markets could enable Wal-Mart to boost volume by at least $80 billion a year," as the company "has the potential to open 350 to 400 small-format stores a year for the next 10 years," and such a "multi-year rollout of a smaller-store format could make Walmart U.S. a growth story once again."[17] Garrick Brown, vice president of research at Colliers International, echoed these sentiments, saying "smaller designs, in the 20,000-square-foot range, and mostly groceries—that's where the money is."[18]

Critics contend that Walmart's growth plan in New York City would require it to create 11 supercenters, 34 Walmart markets, and 114 Walmart expresses to reach 21 percent of the grocery retailing market (its national average).[19] While this potential exists for Walmart, Eric Holt-Giménez has emphasized that the company still needed to figure out a way to address the "high real estate prices" and "resistance from organized labor" that have always put up roadblocks to its urbanization.[20] In the case of East New York, Walmart sought to reduce these barriers by taking advantage of the national-level discourse of food deserts and grocery gaps, City Hall's framing of the problems of and solutions to

inequities in grocery retailing, and the media's portrayal of East New York as a food desert.

East New York is often viewed as a community struggling with food inequities. In online articles it is listed as one of the worst food swamps in New York City and one of the worst food deserts in the country, together with areas in New Orleans, Chicago, Atlanta, and Detroit.[21] Reports by the New York City Department of City Planning confirm this popular image, although the community is not a food desert according to USDA criteria.[22] Nevertheless, East New York is a community underserved by grocery retailers in terms of both size and number of stores. The average store in the community is three times smaller than the average store in New York City as a whole and nearly eight times smaller than the average suburban store.[23] In terms of grocery store area per person, East New York's figure is 7.5 times smaller than that for New York City as a whole.[24] Based on these findings, City Hall sees East New York as one of five neighborhoods with "the highest potential for new, full service grocery store space" and has concluded that a grocery retail potential of 84,144 square feet exists in East New York—an area nearly triple the community's existing grocery store footage.[25]

East New York is not alone in facing these problems in the Big Apple.[26] According to a report generated for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, three million people are underserved by grocery stores, a situation that creates higher grocery costs in working-class communities and leads to $1 billion in grocery spending outside of the city each year.[27] Based on these findings, city officials created the Food Retail Expansion Program to Support Health (FRESH) in December 2009 to deploy zoning and financial incentives (subsidies) with the aim of bringing grocery stores and supermarkets back to underserved and high-need communities.[28] The program focuses on nineteen neighborhoods in the south and central Bronx, north and central Brooklyn, and eastern Queens. Home to 1.12 million people, these high-need areas were found to be able to support 1.1 million square feet of new full-service grocery store space.[29] City officials are not interested in merely recapturing the $1 billion lost each year in grocery sales. New grocery stores were also framed as an economic multiplier that would create jobs, expand the tax base, raise property values, and fuel further private-sector investment.[30]

The growth-oriented politics of FRESH were on full display during a groundbreaking ceremony for a Key Food supermarket in Staten Island. Mayor Michael Bloomberg spoke glowingly of FRESH, declaring that the "FRESH program brings down the cost of opening, expanding, and operating grocery stores—something that helps improve access to food and create jobs in all five boroughs."[31] Deputy Mayor Robert K. Steel built on this declaration: "Increasing access to fresh food in communities across the five boroughs means healthier lifestyles and more jobs. This critical incentive program is helping expand

economic opportunity in areas where private investment is needed most."[32] Seth Pinsky, president of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, further emphasized the benefits of FRESH in terms of redevelopment, food access, and job creation: "The FRESH program has already had a dramatic impact not just here in Staten Island, but throughout the five boroughs, with 14 projects in the works that will inject tens of millions of dollars into the local economy, improve access to healthy and nutritious foods, redevelop vacant buildings, and create hundreds of jobs in neighborhoods that need them most."[33]

The coupling of redevelopment, food access, and job creation was reinforced by Nancy O. Andrews, president and CEO of the Low Income Investment Fund: "Store owner Amy Doleh is a proven entrepreneur who will transform a vacant building into a high quality, supermarket. This store will make a tremendous positive difference in the lives of local residents, particularly benefitting the many low-income families in the neighborhood, by increasing access to healthy, nutritious food and creating new jobs."[34] In closing, Pat Brodheagan of the Food Industry Alliance of New York State brought the redevelopment, food access, and job creation framing of FRESH to its logical conclusion: "FRESH projects . . . frequently restore property to productive use, provide jobs, contribute to neighborhood stability and attract additional retail to the neighborhood. . . . *Good health is definitely also good business*."[35]

What is significant in this series of statements is that by coupling redevelopment, food access, and job creation, public and quasi-public officials had presented solutions to inequities in grocery retailing as part of the prerogative of creating a profitable environment for business, as if securing corporate profits was equivalent to securing the right to food for residents. I contend that this occurred because the implicit (if not explicit) logic shaping FRESH is that the lack of jobs, grocery stores, and financial investment in working-class communities is due not to anti-Blackness but an economic climate that is not business friendly. In other words, taxes and regulations are too burdensome, a problem that can be addressed only through neoliberal supply-side initiatives. In this regard, FRESH is a perfect example of the power of the growth machine and its ability to shape public initiatives to address social inequities. In the classic article "The City as a Growth Machine," Harvey Molotch defines growth machines as coalitions among city officials, property developers, bankers, and speculators to maximize profits from urban development. For Molotch,

> The very essence of a locality is its operation as a growth machine. . . . [T]he desire for growth provides the key operative motivation toward consensus for members of politically mobilized local elites, however split they might be on other issues. . . . Historically, U.S. cities were created and sustained largely through this process; it continues to be the significant dynamic of

> contemporary local political economy and is critical to the allocation of public resources and the ordering of local issue agendas. . . . This growth imperative is [also] the most important constraint upon available options for local initiative in social and economic reform.[36]

The outcome of making the city a growth machine, according to Molotch, is that "leaders of public or quasi-public agencies" advocate on behalf of development projects that will generate profits for corporations and tax dollars for City Hall.[37] These public and quasi-public actors also work extremely hard at legitimating such projects as being in the general interest of all residents, not just the private interests of the economic and political elite, through the discourse of job creation: "The key ideological prop for the growth machine, especially in terms of sustaining support from the working-class majority, is the claim that growth 'makes jobs.' This claim is aggressively promulgated by developers, builders, and chambers of commerce; it becomes a part of the statesmen talk of editorialists and political officials."[38]

All of the aspects of the growth machine discussed by Molotch come together in FRESH: there is a coalition of public and quasi-public actors aiming to maximize profits from urban development, the coalition has framed the problem of inequities in grocery retailing in ways that benefit private business and foreclose more transformative solutions, and the FRESH program is sold to working-class communities through the language of job creation. Additionally, to update Molotch's work for a nation increasingly obsessed with food as a marker of class, status, health, and power, City Hall now uses the discourse of "healthy food access" as well as that of "job creation" to legitimate public subsidies for growth-oriented development projects.

All of this discursive work on behalf of FRESH by the growth machine also laid the groundwork for Walmart to suggest that it was part of the solution to the problems of food inequities and lack of jobs in working-class communities. Steven Restivo, director of community affairs for Walmart, said, "We know that job creation and access to affordable food are significant needs in the city and we think our stores can be part of the solution."[39] The company then set its sights on locating a supercenter in one of the largest economic development projects in Brooklyn, the Gateway Estates project in East New York. The project consists of two suburban-style shopping centers totaling 1.2 million square feet of retail space (Gateway Center North and South); affordable housing for over seven thousand people; and numerous public amenities, including a school, day-care facility, community center, park, and grassland preserve.

Walmart's discourse that couples job creation and food access by way of a discount food retailer not only meshed with City Hall's framing of the FRESH initiative, it also fit well with how elected representatives had framed the benefits of Gateway Estates for New Yorkers through the logic of the growth

machine. City Hall continually boasted about the lifetime economic impacts of the twin shopping centers, including "4,400 construction jobs, 1,700 permanent jobs, $730 million in economic activity, and $40 million in annual revenue for the City," and at the groundbreaking of the Gateway Center, Bloomberg spoke enthusiastically of the project's potential, saying that "some of the leading retail businesses have decided to put roots down here in East New York, and it's no surprise, because Brooklyn, like the rest of New York City, is a great place to do business."[40] Governor George E. Pataki expanded on the mayor's claims, emphasizing that he and other elected officials were busy turning New York State into a growth story once again: "We've helped create more than 600,000 new jobs across the State by cutting billions of dollars in taxes, reducing burdensome regulations and implementing smart, business-friendly initiatives and policies. The new jobs created by this outstanding new development is [*sic*] another example of how these policies are paying off for New Yorkers."[41] Given the growth machine–centric framing of FRESH and Gateway Estates, it would appear that Walmart's own growth project in New York City could be grafted onto both fairly easily. However, this would turn out not to be the case, as Walmart's efforts to frame itself as part of the solution to East New York's social, economic, and food inequities dragged the Gateway Estates project into controversy, negative publicity, and serious public opposition.

Bringing a Walmart to East New York: The Solution or the Problem?

East New Yorkers have fought long and hard for access to fresh affordable produce. Yet when rumors began to circulate that Walmart was planning to open a store in East New York, many residents aligned with community organizations, unions, and elected representatives to prevent such an occurrence based on notions of food, economic, and racial justice. The opposition started small on May 24, 2010, when residents and members of New York Communities for Change (NYCC) gathered in a circle in front of Spring Creek Towers.[42] Located a mile from the proposed Walmart supercenter, the sprawling complex is home to over fourteen thousand people in nearly six thousand apartments and is considered an exemplar of affordable public housing for East New Yorkers.[43] Those who had assembled began marching up and down the sidewalk in front of the towers chanting "No Walmart" and "Walmart has got to go." Some residents held signs provided by NYCC saying "NO WALMART FOR BROOKLYN!," while others held signs that had the word Walmart crossed out in black, underscoring that the company was not welcome there. Many of the people who showed up to protest Walmart emphasized the company's bad jobs and history of race and gender discrimination. Sofi Rosenblun declared, "There's more to life than cheap underwear," while Pat Boone

exclaimed, "Everyone wants to save money these days. But not at the cost of supporting a place that mistreats its employees."[44]

Over the summer and fall, existing bridges were strengthened and new ones built between community organizations, unions, small business associations, and elected officials, with members of all the groups attending a rally in December at City Hall. The rally, which occurred before a City Council hearing to discuss the potential economic impacts of Walmart's entrance into the Big Apple, was spearheaded by Barron and NYCC, with Barron directing the crowd with chants of "Walmart must go!" Many of the attendees were concerned about the effects of Walmart on working conditions in the city, a theme articulated very clearly by one attendee: "We need good paying jobs, not minimum wage jobs. We need employers that treat their workers fairly, not stores that discriminate against women and minorities."[45] The scene was quite a juxtaposition to the pro-Walmart rally that occurred on the same site several hours later. Divine Pryor, of the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions, led this rally and emphasized that "jobs equal public safety. Jobs equal public health. Jobs equal economic stimulus. Jobs equal opportunities for individuals to be integrated back into their community."[46] Nadine Whitted, district manager of Community Board 4, also endorsed the company's entry into the local market, based on the belief that it could provide jobs to Bushwick residents who needed them. She said, "I think it's a good idea personally. . . . Wal-Mart will hopefully provide some job opportunities. . . . If people aren't working, hopefully the unemployed can be employed."[47]

Two months later these two forces were brought face to face again when the City Council held another hearing to discuss the economic impacts of Walmart on New York City. Prior to the meeting, hundreds of protestors from unions, small-business associations, and community groups lined up in the street and on the steps of City Hall and bellowed anti-Walmart chants.[48] The crowd was full of people waving yellow, red, white, and green poster boards. The sea of colors expressed a diversity of ways to tell Walmart that it was not wanted. Some declared, "Queens says 'No' to Walmart," "Bronx says 'No' to Walmart," and "We don't want Walmart," while others stated "Walmart kills jobs" and "WALMART discriminates against women." Inside the hearing, many City Council members spoke out against Walmart, including Jumaane D. Williams (D-Flatbush), who declared, "My community needs jobs, but even if you're hungry, someone shouldn't feed you garbage"—referring to the poor quality of Walmart's low-road jobs.[49] Two of Walmart's most vocal opponents were Council Speaker Christine Quinn (D-Manhattan) and Barron. "No matter what Walmart propaganda says," Quinn stated, "they are not a company that is good for New York City. . . . Walmart has a public and proven track record of creating jobs that do not pay sufficiently, nor offer feasible health insurance options. . . . You [Walmart] cannot come to New York City and

behave the way you have behaved in other parts of the country. New York City will simply not stand for it."[50] Barron upped the ante during the hearing, proclaiming: "There are no slaves in East New York, and Walmart is nothing but a plantation. We want jobs with dignity, integrity and self-respect."[51]

Although many City Council members spoke out against Walmart, not everyone shared their sentiments. Eric Ulrich (R-Ozone Park), representing an area immediately east of East New York, supported the big-box store's entry into the city: "Walmart wants to come here and provide union construction jobs and permanent positions that offer wages equal to or higher than many of their competitors, and allow people to save substantially on their grocery bill. Why should my constituents—many of whom are on fixed incomes—pay more for a gallon of milk or a loaf of bread? It's not the job of politicians or special interest groups, especially in today's economy, to block economic development."[52]

Ulrich's opinion was shared by numerous other people at the hearing, people who were happy to have Walmart show interest in East New York when so many other businesses have refused to invest in the community. "Everybody says it's low-wage jobs but guess what, we all started at low-wage jobs, everyone I know did," commented Heather Martarello of Long Island.[53] "This will create relief in the street, people will be able to have a job. Walmart is going to be able to hire people who were formerly incarcerated," stated Mike Tucker of the Lay the Guns Down campaign.[54] Tony Herbert of the Walmart 2 New York City campaign, an East New York activist, showed up at the rally with the names of thirty thousand people declaring they wanted a Walmart in East New York. "We as a community are suffering," he said. "We need jobs now for our community and we need people to survive."[55]

Besides trying to challenge this positive framing of Walmart as the solution to poverty in East New York, actors in the GFGJ coalition have sought to prevent the company's entrance into the community by getting the city and state to exercise their power as landowners. In April 2011, a public hearing was held about the transfer of city land in East New York to Related, the company that is developing Gateway Estates. At the hearing, elected representatives, community organizers, and residents expressed their opinions about why the city should not sell twenty-six acres of land to Related, a sale that the mayor must sign off on. There were two primary objections to the sale. The first was that Related had originally promised to bring in a unionized grocery store. Barron said, "We had a verbal agreement with them [Related] that they would lease to a union shop and not to Walmart. This is about not allowing a company to lie to us."[56] The second was that the land was valued at more than the $35 million sales price. Josh Kellerman of the Manhattan-based Jobs for Justice emphasized this point by contending that the city appraisal was for a smaller development project than the one that would eventually be built, necessitating a higher sales price.[57]

These tactics were similar to the ones previously employed to try to stop the state from selling a parcel of land to Related for Gateway Estates.[58] Since the development project is a so-called as-of-right project that does not require public hearings or review by the City Council, the City Planning Commission, or community boards, the only leverage the City Council has is that legally any state-owned property must be sold "at a fair and equitable price," which centered attention on the appraised value of the land and whether it reflected the size and scale of Gateway Estates.[59] The location of the property in the district of New York State Senator John Sampson (D-southeast Brooklyn) was also not encouraging for those opposing Walmart. Although Sampson had not made up his mind about Walmart, his spokesperson, Michael Roberts, stated that Sampson's "biggest preoccupation has been putting New Yorkers back to work, and Walmart, of course, comes with jobs."[60] Roberts' statement highlights, once again, the power of growth machine politics over elected officials.

Even with the promise of job creation working against them, the GFGJ coalition tried to persuade the mayor and state officials not to sign off on the sale of land until Related promised not to rent space to Walmart. "The governor should not sign off on this until they get an agreement not to destroy our economy with Walmart," said Barron. "Walmart is like a predatory retailer. . . . They do not pay living wage jobs. They do not allow unionizing. If you do unionizing, they shut you down. They do not give pensions, they do not give health care and they wind up having people work part-time. . . . [Walmart] does not have a contract with Gateway, but they are trying to sneak in behind the curtain. We do not want the Walmart plantation in East New York."[61] Barron's critique of Walmart here is particularly salient. In viewing Walmart as a plantation, he invokes a racialized discourse of economic exploitation linking the bad jobs and poverty of Walmart workers with the slavery and plunder of Black people. In doing so, he brings to the foreground a history of racial capitalism in the United States that has been central to creating the social, economic, and political inequities that East New Yorkers experience on a daily basis—a history organized in and through Black labor as a workforce that cost white owners little or nothing. The six heirs to the Walmart fortune, members of the Walton family, are the richest family in the United States and one of the richest globally, worth about $190 billion in 2019.[62] The family receives over $4 million an hour and $100 million a day, while an entry-level Walmart worker receives just $11 an hour and less than $88 a day (assuming the person has an eight-hour workday with an unpaid lunch break).[63] More astonishing is the fact that the six heirs have a net worth equal to about 40 percent of the net worth of all households in the United States.[64] These racial and class inequities lie at the heart of Barron's critique of Walmart as a plantation: the wealth of the Walton family is based on the poverty and unfreedom of its workers.

Grounding the critique of Walmart in a racialized discourse of capitalist exploitation is not unique to Barron. Bertha Lewis, who works for the Alliance for a Greater New York and who used to be the CEO and chief organizer of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, was vehement in her opposition to Walmart's entrance into the city, based on her desire to create good jobs (not just any jobs) for residents:

> Their [Walmart] strategy now is urban expansion, which is [a] code word for Black and brown neighborhoods, poor neighborhoods, places that they believe are not as powerful politically, that have high unemployment and poverty, so that they can come in and be a predatory retailer. For years, a red line was drawn around these neighborhoods, and they didn't have access to credit. It's almost the same language now. It's, "Aww, you don't have access to fresh food," and, "[A]ww, you don't have access to affordable goods. Let Walmart help you." It's a cynical race-based ploy. What they didn't count on is that we're not here for a Walmart plantation. There was full employment on plantations, but we're not going to do that here."[65]

In calling Walmart a predatory retailer and a plantation, as well as highlighting the historical effects of redlining on communities such as East New York, Lewis evoked and built upon Barron's characterization of Walmart as the latest form of wage slavery for Black communities. Lewis not only emphasized how Black America has been produced as an unwaged or low-wage labor force by public and private actors for hundreds of years, but she also underscored how the racialization of public and private divestment in East New York has created opportunities for low-road employers to present themselves as the solution to economic marginalization rather than the latest manifestation of these processes of oppression and exploitation.

Good Food and Good Jobs: Framings for Food Justice

What becomes apparent in the heated public battle over Walmart in New York City is the contrasting framings that the pro- and anti-Walmart contingents have for Walmart's impact on East New York. One way to understand these opposing framings is to understand that the two sides approach Walmart's offer of jobs from very different standpoints. Walmart supporters may not be judging a Walmart job as good absolutely (based on its wages and benefits) but relatively (based on what other jobs exist in the community). The high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty in East New York resulting from racial capitalism have created a situation in which many residents are open to Walmart as an employer, since working there is better than being unemployed or on welfare. In addition, Walmart supporters appear to view a

Walmart job as one that creates the conditions for upward mobility because it provides the entry-level experience and skills that can get them better jobs later. Within such a framework, a Walmart job is not a dead-end job for the unemployed or informally employed but rather the first rung on the economic ladder of the American Dream. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for many Walmart employees.[66]

Conversely, Walmart opponents see a job as good if it offers the worker good wages and benefits. Rather than focusing on the ability of people to move up in the social structure through individual competition, as Walmart supporters do, the anti-Walmart movement shines a light on the structure of the labor market in working-class communities of color and how residents' quality of life is negatively impacted by the preponderance of low-road jobs. The GFGJ coalition is trying to prevent people from thinking that any job is better than no job by emphasizing that Walmart jobs are not the solution to poverty, economic marginalization, and food inequities but are emblematic of the relations and structures that produced these problems in the first place. What is needed in East New York, according to anti-Walmart activists, are not more low-road jobs but the restructuring of the labor market in East New York to provide high-road jobs for all.

One of the actors working toward the goal of high-road jobs for all has been the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the sixth largest labor union in the country. With over 1.3 million members spread across numerous industries, the UFCW has created and funded various organizations made up of Walmart employees to strengthen and expand their fight for better working conditions at the company.[67] These organizations include Organization United for Respect at Walmart, Making Change at Walmart, Walmart Watch, and Wake Up Walmart. Why is the UFCW so invested in changing working conditions at Walmart? Jennifer Stapleton, assistant director of Making Change at Walmart, stated: "The mission of the UFCW is to raise standards for workers in the retail and grocery industry. . . . You cannot change the standards in the retail and grocery industry unless you also change Wal-Mart," because it sets the standards.[68] For the UFCW, pushing back against Walmart is a strategic choice for transforming low-road jobs into high-road ones. Rather than exerting a lot of resources trying to organize all the low-road employers, the UFCW has focused on the company that has the most market power (Walmart) and worked hard to get it to change its labor practices, with the belief that this would create a beneficial ripple effect for all workers in the retail and service sectors. An example of this occurred in 2015 when a tightening labor market and pressure from the anti-Walmart movement as well as the Fight for $15 pushed Walmart to raise its base wage. That move was soon followed by McDonald's, Target, T. J. Maxx, and Marshalls because these companies compete for the same workers.[69]

UFCW's focus on Walmart is a testament to the incredible power that the company has amassed in grocery retailing in less than three decades. Walmart went from having no grocery sales in the mid-1980s to having over half of its sales come from groceries by the 2010s.[70] Today, the company sells more groceries than any other chain.[71] In fact, a mere three companies account for nearly 40 percent of all grocery sales in the United States: Walmart (including its subsidiary, Sam's Club), Kroger, and Albertsons.[72] Among these three companies, Walmart is the undisputed goliath: it controls over 20 percent of grocery sales nationally, compared to 9 percent for Kroger and 5 percent for Albertsons.[73] And similar to its impacts on other markets it competes in, Walmart's growing domination of grocery retailing has contributed to a dramatic restructuring of the working conditions of millions of grocery store workers. There has been an overall decline in the number of unionized grocery store workers, from 31 percent in 1983 to under 17 percent by the 2010s.[74] This decline has been accompanied by a decrease in the wages of grocery store workers, particularly in the 2000s and 2010s, so that the typical grocery worker now earns around less than $20,000 per year—not nearly a living wage.[75] Recent research in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles has even found that close to 25 percent of grocery workers are not paid a minimum wage; 65 percent are not paid overtime; 75 percent are not paid for working before or after their shifts; and 57 percent experienced either denied, shortened, or interrupted meal breaks.[76]

These working conditions are attributable not just to the expansion of Walmart and Target into grocery retailing, since the majority of grocery retailers are not unionized, but also to how unionized grocery chains (including Kroger (and its subsidiaries Safeway and Vons), Albertsons, and Stop & Shop), have pushed for wage and benefit concessions from their workers based on claims that they need to stay competitive with Walmart's low-road model.[77] These claims are made even though these companies have spent billions of dollars on "share repurchases, dividends, and debt repayment," rather than on improving the wages and benefits of their workers.[78] Such practices are troubling because these companies have long presented a high-road employment model for grocery retailing, and their subsequent embrace of a low-road model signals that without countervailing forces, low-road jobs may become all that is available for grocery store workers.

Joe Hansen, the international president of the UFCW, emphasized in particular the role of Walmart in the restructuring of the United States economy around low-road jobs and how this has negatively affected people's ability to put good food on the table: "The First Lady's commitment to addressing childhood obesity in the U.S. is laudable and the UFCW commends her for her enthusiasm for such a worthy endeavor. But with income disparity between the rich and the poor at more extreme levels than during the Great Depression, Walmart must be held accountable for its track record of lower standards for

millions of retail workers. Walmart is more responsible than any other private employer in our country for creating poverty-level jobs that leave workers unable to purchase healthy food or provide a good life for their families."[79]

In New York City this relationship between bad jobs and food inequities pushed UFCW Local 1500 to work with the local affiliate of Jobs with Justice to launch the Building Blocks Project in 2008 to bring "good food, good jobs, and good health" to every New Yorker.[80] A central part of this campaign involved working with Bloomberg, Quinn, the Department of City Planning, and a coalition of community groups to create FRESH. Through being involved in FRESH, UFCW emphasized that creating more grocery stores in underserved communities is an important goal, but that such an effort needs to create high-road jobs for workers—for if new grocery stores are not required to provide such jobs, they may offer only part-time and low-wage jobs that reinforce the poverty and economic marginalization that created food inequities in the first place. Quinn reinforced this message at a rally organized by the UFCW and led by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union:

> Now we in the Council feel very strongly that we need to get more retail establishments, particularly those that sell supermarket food good for people. That is why we are the first city in the country to pass a rezoning encouraging supermarkets to develop in the city of New York. But in that rezoning we were clear about the types of supermarket jobs we wanted and that we wanted them to be assets to the community and help build the community. That simply is not Walmart. Now if Walmart wants to usher in a new day we are happy to sit down with them and write a New York philosophy and a New York business plan. But until that happens they can call themselves whatever they want, they can have a new urban store that's smaller, but until they change their ways they are Walmart and they are not welcome in our five boroughs.[81]

Quinn insisted that grocery jobs should be good jobs and that until Walmart can make its jobs good jobs, it is not welcome in New York City. Her statement also brings to light a fear of UFCW Local 1500, which is that FRESH could attract low-road employers, such as Walmart, rather than high-road employers. This fear is warranted, given that public officials never really defined the quality of the jobs being created through FRESH or how such jobs would enable residents to afford good food. Fortunately, this fear has yet to be realized, as the majority of grocery stores that have participated in FRESH are unionized, but this outcome is not a direct result of how FRESH was created, since it has no good job requirements. Even though FRESH lacks such requirements (an important omission), the organizing of UFCW Local 1500 and its connections with elected officials and community organizations did a lot of important discursive work to emphasize that FRESH should not be a growth

machine project but an economic justice project in which food can be used strategically to create good jobs in working-class communities of color.

Given the diverging opinions among East New Yorkers about Walmart, I asked ENYF! staff members whether they thought that Walmart could play a positive role in the food justice movement. The answer was a resounding no. Janelle "Jin" Nicol Galvez, markets and outreach coordinator of ENYF!, claimed that Walmart and the food justice movement are "two completely different things" and rejected the idea that bringing Walmart to East New York is a good way to address inequitable food relations: "I do not think that is the solution. They need to come to the communities and see what is really going on and be real about what they are doing," referring to the type of economic development the company would bring to the community and how it is using food inequities as a pretext for addressing its economic growth needs. Deborah Greig, agriculture director of ENYF!, saw some benefit in Walmart's embrace of organic options, which reduces the use of herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides in farming and would be very beneficial to farmworkers employed on and communities living adjacent to industrial farms. But overall, she saw more negatives than positives in Walmart's business model: "The food systems are industrial, so they are not supporting a local economy and smaller farmers. They are still supporting an industry that is underselling farmers and underpaying farmworkers and creating hazardous work conditions. The job culture they create is also not sustainable: jobs are either part-time or underpaid, and they union bust. The jobs that they are creating and the systems that they are supporting are not great." Sarita Daftary-Steel, project director of ENYF!, echoed the comments of Galvez and Greig and does not believe that Walmart has much of a positive role to play in the food justice movement:

> It is really hard for me to think of a way that Walmart could be reformed to be part of the food justice movement that emphasizes people having ownership and decision-making power. A giant like Walmart is always going to stick it to producers, and that is why they want to be so big because they can set their price. Then the way they treat their workers, which is also connected to their size—that they are so big that they can just dominate the employment market and do what they want with wages—that is never going to be compatible with a just food system.

These comments from ENYF! staff members support the high-road job goals of the GFGJ and emphasize that the pursuit of food justice entails improving the employment conditions for all workers in the food system. This is why ENYF! and UCC are not just opposed to a Walmart in East New York but have partnered with other social justice organizations to create better jobs in grocery stores that already exist in the community. An example of this is when

workers from the local Farm Country store and organizers from NYCC used UCC's gym as a meeting space in a successful campaign to get workers half a million dollars in back wages and secure their right to unionize.[82]

ENYF!'s support for grocery store workers emerges, in part, from how the organization views the short-term possibilities for creating high-road jobs in the food system. While many people want to be able to construct a win-win scenario for urban agriculture organizations in which they can create food access and good jobs at the same time, Daftary-Steel's experience in the movement has led her to believe that this will be very difficult to achieve:

> People really want to say, "Oh we can create food access for people with limited financial resources, we can provide social benefits like job training for young people or maybe employment for formerly incarcerated people or people with developmental disabilities, and at the same time we can be creating living-wage jobs," and the math generally doesn't work. There are too many challenges there because of the way that we have historically had very cheap food in this country. I think there are a lot of layers within agriculture, and food production especially, that make it hard to see the creation of a lot of living-wage jobs as an immediate possibility.[83]

Based on this perspective, ENYF! understands that the number of good jobs that can be generated through urban agriculture in East New York is limited, at least for the time being. However, Daftary-Steel also mentioned that workers in locations in the food system farther from food production might have more opportunity to improve their working conditions: "I think that within some of the other food chain jobs—like processing, distribution, packing—that are more like industrial manufacturing jobs, there may be a little bit more potential there right now." Not only might there be more organizing potential in these jobs, according to Daftary-Steel, but the majority of the food system jobs in East New York are going to be in light manufacturing, fast food, and grocery retailing. Therefore, it makes strategic sense for ENYF! and UCC to partner with organizations mobilizing in these areas, since such partnerships could have a significant impact on reducing food inequities for residents by raising the household incomes of East New Yorkers.

Generating Support for Walmart: Throwing Money around and Trying to Buy Good Will

Walmart prepared for and responded to the opposition emerging from community groups, labor unions, and elected representatives in several ways. The company took out ads in local papers, created the website WalmartNYC.com, and conducted numerous public opinion polls to garner support for its entrance

into New York City.[84] It signed a ten-year lease for an executive office in Times Square and joined the "Association for a Better New York, the Partnership for New York City, and the chambers of commerce in four of the city's boroughs."[85] Walmart also brought on board prominent local- and national-level operatives to run its New York City campaign and build the support needed to win over opponents. These included Bradley Tusk, who managed Bloomberg's reelection bid in 2009, and Doug Schoen, who previously worked for Bloomberg and Bill and Hillary Clinton.[86] The most important person was Dach, who was given the job of rebranding Walmart as urban friendly.[87] Dach has a long history with liberal organizations and causes, having worked for the National Audubon Society; the Environmental Defense Fund; and seven presidential campaigns, including those for Edward Kennedy, Michael Dukakis, and Al Gore. Dach's experience is seen as vital to helping Walmart win over liberals and Democratic politicians as the company tries to move into New York City.

The approach that emerged from Dach's office included a framing strategy and a philanthropic strategy. The framing strategy focused on how Walmart would be a solution to the employment and food access problems facing working-class communities. This included an op-ed in the *New York Daily News* by Bill Simon, president and chief executive officer of Walmart, which stated: "With unemployment in some areas of the city above 15%, we'll offer New Yorkers good jobs and good careers. . . . Our stores will become hubs of economic activity. We can help revitalize neighborhoods while bringing in sales tax revenue. . . . The new tax revenue we'll generate could help sustain crucial city programs. . . . We'll also provide access to fresh groceries for some of the 3 million New Yorkers who don't have that access today. We're committed to addressing 'food deserts,' because everyone should be able to find healthy food they can afford."[88]

Walmart's emphasis on job creation, neighborhood redevelopment, sales tax revenue, and food access is almost a word-for-word reproduction of how New York City's growth machine has framed FRESH. Thus, Walmart was tapping into and reinforcing the dominant narrative legitimating public subsidies for capitalist enterprises as the solution to food inequities. Furthermore, Walmart was claiming that a big-box discount retailer could be a conduit for the economic revitalization of East New York rather than just the continuation of business as usual for the community, yet another employer offering low-road jobs. To legitimate the claim that the company was a solution to the problems facing East New Yorkers, Walmart went beyond the typical growth-machine discourse of creating jobs by claiming that it was creating "good jobs and good careers," language that was absent from how public and quasi-public officials framed FRESH.[89] The use of such language was clearly an attempt to revise the company's public image as a creator of bad jobs, as well as the labeling of the company as a plantation by critics. However, it was also an effort to tap

into the hope of some residents that Walmart's entry-level jobs could indeed be the way up the class structure. Walmart's language of good jobs and good careers, when paired with the company's focus on being committed to addressing "food deserts," is something more, though. I contend that it is an attempt to co-opt the language of GFGJ that has been used by unions and community-based organizations since 2008 to assert the need for more high-road grocery store jobs in working-class communities. In this respect, Walmart was trying to make itself appear compatible with, rather than the opposite of, the GFGJ frame.

The philanthropic strategy of Walmart built on the company's framing strategy by trying to quell political opposition through channeling its profits into charitable causes aligned with liberal voters and politicians. At the national level, Walmart donated to National Public Radio and left-leaning nonprofits such as Demos and the Center for American Progress.[90] Within New York City, the company donated over $800,000 for summer education programs for youths; $150,000 for a concert series founded by Marty Markowitz, Brooklyn Borough's president; and $4 million to the Summer Youth Employment Program to save 3,400 youth jobs from budget cuts.[91] The company also sought to build connections with food and environmental organizations in the city by donating nearly $400,000 to renovate the Food Bank for New York City's 90,000-square-foot warehouse, $100,000 to the New York Botanical Garden to restore the Bronx River, and $100,000 to the Department of Environmental Protection to restore the Jamaica Bay Salt Marsh.[92] In all, from 2007 to 2011 Walmart donated over $13 million dollars to New York City organizations as it sought to create positive public relations and the political will necessary for realizing its project of urban expansion.[93] These donations are also an example of Walmart's attempt to whitewash and greenwash its corporate history, which is based on opposing labor rights, contesting environmental regulations, and funding conservative causes.[94] At the same time, given the sustainability bias of major environmental organizations and their general neglect of labor rights, this is a wise play by Walmart: claim that you are becoming green to try and win over liberals.[95]

Despite these donations, Walmart's initial investment did not pay dividends, as its philanthropic efforts were framed by elected representatives, the anti-Walmart movement, and many media organizations as de facto bribes to allow the company to enter the city. In particular, Quinn, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, and City Comptroller John Liu (all Democratic mayoral candidates at the time) continued speaking out against Walmart in the spring of 2012, on the heels of a massive scandal in Mexico in which the company was accused of paying $24 million in bribes to "win market dominance."[96] Given this Democratic opposition, the window of opportunity for Walmart's entrance was closing, as Bloomberg, who was supportive of the retailer, had only two years left in his third and final term as mayor.

Ultimately, Walmart's efforts to locate in East New York ended in defeat, reminiscent of the company's failed attempts to enter Queens and Staten Island in the mid-2000s. Even though Walmart smartly built on City Hall's framing of FRESH and Gateway Estates, tapped into the belief of some residents and community leaders that any job would be better than no job, and tried to buy good will through philanthropic activity, the company came up against many hurdles that prevented its success. Pro-Walmart residents were not as well organized as the GFGJ coalition, and elected representatives sympathetic to Walmart were generally not as actively engaged in shaping the company's public image as the representatives who were opposed to Walmart's entrance. The constant pressure from community organizations and unions on Walmart, their ability to keep the heat on City Council members, and regular coverage of these actions by local news outlets all worked together to keep the company on the defensive and shape the dominant narrative of Walmart's entrance into East New York as undesirable. The fact that the GFGJ coalition was based on long-standing organizations that had preexisting relationships as well as connections with elected representatives and the media was a key factor, too. The organizations could devote their time to planning actions and cultivating a long-term strategy rather than having to start organizing and building capacity from scratch. Additionally, given that the anti-Walmart organizations already had a strong membership base and a focus on social justice, opposing Walmart fit well with their existing politics and did not have to be awkwardly grafted onto their existing actions and campaigns.

The local anti-Walmart movement benefited from the national anti-Walmart movement as well, which had begun to alter how the general public and media organizations talked about the company: not as one that prioritized consumer freedom, but as one that exploited its workers. This meant that the local anti-Walmart organizations could easily tap into existing talking points and frames that people understood rather than having to start the framing process from scratch. The emergence of the Occupy movement also helped, as it centered public discussion on the problem of economic inequality and corporate plutocracy and thereby shifted the political climate in the city in a direction favorable to the discourse of GFGJ. Another advantage was that Democratic City Council members and mayoral candidates generally have to speak to the concerns of working-class communities about good jobs and often depend upon campaign contributions and endorsements from local unions. Both of these factors helped make the politics of City Council members and mayoral candidates largely anti-Walmart.

The fact that the Walmart Mexico bribery scandal became headline news during this time further reinforced Walmart's public image as a corporate villain, an image that the 2013 Democratic mayoral candidates used to their advantage. By this time, many New Yorkers had become disenchanted with Bloomberg, who had been able to get the City Council to overturn term

limits so he could run for (and win) a third term in 2009. De Blasio's election as mayor in 2013, when he ran as a progressive Democrat and beat his Republican opponent by nearly a 49-point margin, reflects this disenchantment with Bloomberg.[97] But de Blasio's win is also attributable to his campaign promise to fight the "Tale of Two Cities" that emerged in the Big Apple under Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Bloomberg—a promise that resonated with residents and took advantage of the broader progressive cultural shift happening in many cities throughout the United States.[98]

All of these aspects worked in favor of the GFGJ coalition, and instead of a Walmart supercenter, a unionized ShopRite supermarket now anchors Gateway Estates. The store, which received FRESH incentives, occupies 90,000 square feet, which is three times the square footage of all the previously existing grocery store space in East New York and makes it the largest grocery store in New York City. It also employs 350 full- or part-time workers who have better wages, health care, and retirement benefits than Walmart employees do.[99] Consequently, unlike Walmart, ShopRite was framed as an "asset to our local community" by Joy Simmons, Barron's chief of staff: praised by Quinn as "a company with a history of responsible business practices"; and applauded by Markowitz for "creat[ing] union jobs at a time when we need them the most."[100]

The grassroots organizing, political opposition, and reframing of the grocery gap discourse by the anti-Walmart movement is significant because its language of GFGJ has the power to shift the framework through which people conceptualize food inequities. By linking food, economic, and racial justice, the public's perspective can be oriented away from geographic barriers and supply-side economics and toward demand-side economics and fiscal and regulatory policies that create access to good food through the creation of good jobs. In the case of East New York, the anti-Walmart coalition was able to use the GFGJ discourse to demand a say in what kind of grocery store development occurred in their neighborhood and who would benefit from this food-centered development, and in the process the coalition became part of a much broader movement that is working to remake the terrain of food politics in the United States by directly challenging the ability of the growth machine to dictate the framing of and solution to social problems.

Conclusion: Addressing the Symptoms or the Roots of Food Inequities?

Over the past decade, public attention has centered on inequities in grocery retailing and what can be done to bring healthy and affordable produce to working-class communities of color. The most prominent solution has been

to bring grocery stores to these communities through public-private partnerships. New York City's FRESH is an example of this policy tool, as well as the limits of such a tool in addressing the root causes of inequitable food relations. At first glance, bringing grocery stores to underserved communities appears to be a public good. However, these grocery gap initiatives focus almost exclusively on providing financial and zoning incentives for business owners, while ignoring any consideration of the type of jobs that will be created and whether these jobs will enable residents to afford good food.

The omission of a high-road job requirement in these ostensibly good food initiatives is noteworthy and underscores the fact that these partnerships and initiatives are primarily about facilitating economic growth and creating a good climate for business rather than realizing food, economic, and racial justice. This bias is particularly apparent with FRESH, which City Hall and public officials talked up as a mechanism for redevelopment, access to healthy food, job creation, and sales tax generation while avoiding discussions of the wages, benefits, and working conditions of the jobs being created. Moreover, this framing laid the groundwork for how Walmart could sell the public on its plans for urban expansion through offering jobs and affordable produce to millions of Americans in struggling working-class communities.

The anti-Walmart movement discussed in this chapter challenges the premise of the Obama-Walmart alliance, FRESH, and the grocery gap discourse in general through the language of GFGJ, emphasizing that a grocery store in and of itself does not end inequities in food access: the type of grocery store matters. Grocery gap initiatives that aim to improve the lives of people in working-class communities must change the employment structure of grocery retailing, as this structure is what is producing the economic marginalization that creates barriers to accessing good food in the first place. This means that grocery gap initiatives need to prioritize turning low-road jobs into high-road ones with local hiring provisions, stable schedules, job security, the right to bargain collectively, living wages, and health and retirement benefits. The GFGJ frame underscores the fact that businesses do not just create good jobs out of thin air, and neither does government supply-side policies such as FRESH. Instead, both business and government have to be pushed to create high-road jobs through community mobilization.

7

Conclusion

Beyond Access, Toward Food Justice

I am sitting at a picnic table at UCC's Youth Farm. The table is painted in vibrant shades of red, yellow, and blue and rests underneath a brown tarp canopy that shields people from the hot summer sun. The smell of freshly harvested garlic permeates the air, bright yellow and orange sunflowers sway in the breeze, and the 3 train slowly screeches by on its way to Harlem. Sitting across from me is Sarita Daftary-Steel, project director of ENYF!, who has started to describe what food justice is all about:

> When I talk about it with the youth, we say that food justice is recognizing that everybody has the right to good fresh food and securing that right. We also use the definition that they use for the Real Food Challenge: food that truly nourishes consumers, producers, the earth, and [the] community. In terms of what food justice looks like, it is a lot of what we are doing here with gardeners that are running their own gardens. It is always a weird thing when people refer to the gardeners as volunteers—volunteers sounds like they are volunteering for me. They run their own site, and they decide what to put there. And yes, we give them assistance, but it is totally at their decision, and through that they are able to provide food for themselves and their neighbors and sell it or give it away and do whatever they want with it. The fact that people from the community who are people of color are selling to other people of color and are

> producing things they know people want and are culturally appropriate—that is a big component. It [food justice] is about people having ownership and decision-making power.[1]

In this description of food justice, Daftary-Steel underscores that it encompasses procedural, substantive, and distributive justice, and that procedural justice is integral to its realization. This assertion is particularly clear when Daftary-Steel flips the script from volunteers to gardeners and emphasizes her belief that control over decision making, not just more equitable outcomes, is central to food justice.

Due to Daftary-Steel's belief in a threefold vision of food justice, she critiqued conceptions of food justice that prioritize a stand-alone distributive justice framework: "Growing food in a low-income community if it does not involve any empowerment or ownership for the people that live there is not a food justice project. It is sort of a disturbing trend to see people say, 'We are growing high-end greens in a rooftop in a low-income neighborhood, and that is food justice because we are hiring some youth from the community.' For us, unless the youth and the community own that business, it is not really a food justice project." In stating that food production in a working-class community of color is not inherently food justice, Daftary-Steel emphasizes that food justice is about more than who is producing food: it also includes the conditions under which that food is produced. In framing food justice in this manner, Daftary-Steel is pushing us to ask pointed questions about self-described food justice projects: Are nonlocals, newcomers, or long-term residents leading the organization and deciding its purpose? Does the organization use a needs-based or an asset-based framework? Does the organization aim to bring good food to residents from outside the community, or does it intend to build up the efforts of existing residents? Is the organization's food politics focused on cultivating good taste or countering economic and political marginalization? Is food production framed as a stand-alone economic enterprise or as a community-organizing strategy?

Daftary-Steel wants us to think deeply about who is growing food; for what reasons; and whether an organization is engaged in the work of charity, solidarity, or self-determination. Asking these questions is paramount, given that the food movement has long invested itself in the access trap and its associated trickle-down food politics—both of which have exacerbated race and class inequities within the food movement and society at large. In privileging the voices, practices, and initiatives emerging from East New York, *Growing Gardens, Building Power* has sought to contest these injustices by challenging the invisibility of the food justice movement and its lack of power in shaping the politics and trajectory of the food movement. In doing so, the book has endeavored to play a role in moving the politics of just sustainabilities from

the margins to the center of the food movement by emphasizing that the movement needs to fuse the pursuit of environmental sustainability with the pursuit of social justice, reject geographic fixes in favor of addressing the racialized power inequities that shape everyday life, reject missionary work in favor of solidarity work, support the right of self-determination for working-class communities of color, and position food justice activists and organizations at the center of movement debates. The book has made these claims because embracing such transformations is fundamental to the long-term efficacy of the food movement if it wants to create a world rooted not merely in social justice and environmental sustainability but also in Black liberation.

The Future of the Food Justice Movement

While *Growing Gardens, Building Power* provides merely a snapshot of food justice activism in East New York during the 2010s, six issues emerge from the community that I contend are pivotal to the future success of ENYF! and the food justice movement in general. How East New Yorkers, ENYF!, and the broader food justice movement grapple with these issues will play a large role in shaping whether the movement embraces neoliberalism; adopts a reformist position; or pursues a transformative path with the goal of reorganizing the social, political, and economic structure of the United States.

Issue 1: Rewriting the Narrative of Inequitable Food Relations

When ENYF! staff members and youth interns give tours of the UCC Youth Farm, they root the history of the organization and the politics of their community food system not in saving the planet or saving small farmers but in countering a history of racism. It is a narrative that explains the formation of community gardening in East New York and the organization of ENYF! as a bottom-up response to redlining, urban renewal, planned shrinkage, and racialized systems of public and private divestment (see chapters 1, 3, and 5). This narrative linking community self-determination, social equity, and racial justice is not commonsense, however, as the organization regularly interacts with potential funders, reporters, public officials, and people at academic conferences who believe that geographic-centric and market-based solutions are sufficient to fixing food inequities.

In this regard, the challenge facing ENYF! and other food justice organizations is whether they can convince people that inequitable food relations are not discrete problems easily solved with the neoliberal solutions of building grocery stores, developing pop-up farmers markets, and providing nutrition education classes to residents. Inequitable food relations are complex, deep, and wicked problems that entail addressing issues outside of the food system (namely, white supremacy and racial capitalism), yet this is not how the public

generally thinks about the problems producing, or the solutions to, food inequities. One way to broadcast this narrative is to communicate it directly to the food movement through websites, conferences, magazines, articles, and books. Fortunately, this work is already under way. An example of this is when Siena Chrisman, who works in the food movement and is a friend of David Vigil, youth program director of ENYF!, wrote an article about ENYF! in *Edible Brooklyn* that emphasized the organization's asset-based perspective and grassroots sweat-equity politics in its approach to building a community food system.[2] Other examples include articles in *Civil Eats*, *The Counter*, and *YES!* magazine on the food justice movement and its transformative and racial justice–oriented politics.[3] More work like this is needed to change how the food movement and those who identify with it understand what food justice is all about. If the food justice movement's framing of food inequities is to become broadly accepted in the United States, the movement will have to interact with the public as a whole. This could take the form of presenting the food justice movement in widely read magazines that espouse a commitment to social justice, including the *Atlantic*, the *Nation*, *Mother Jones*, and *Teen Vogue*. In addition, food justice scholars will need to intervene into debates within academia to contest the way many disciplines have shaped the public's understanding of food inequities to focus on nutrition education and geographic distance rather than on the much more important problems of white supremacy and racial capitalism. This is particularly the case in the fields of public health, urban planning, and social work, as well as sociology and geography.

Such a reframing of food inequities will require white people who are part of the food justice movement to speak to and have difficult but meaningful conversations with their white families, friends, and neighbors; white people in the food movement; and the broader white public about the meaning and politics of transformative food justice. Unless white people are able to challenge and thereby change how other white people conceptualize food inequities, the food justice movement will not be able to push the broader food movement to center racial justice in its politics and work in solidarity with the efforts of people of color to create a just and sustainable world.

Issue 2: Challenging the Real Estate State

Working-class communities of color in New York City have engaged in a massive sweat equity movement to reclaim vacant lots in their neighborhoods (chapter 3). While this grassroots activism has led to the institutionalization of community gardens as part of the public infrastructure through the Green Thumb program, these communities are currently experiencing gentrification or facing the threat of it. The question lingering in the minds of long-term residents is whether these gardens will be for the gentrifiers or the gentrified. Will existing gardens change their membership and lose their food justice politics

as the gardener population becomes more affluent and whiter? Will gentrifiers demonize and criminalize long-term residents' customary use of gardens as de facto public parks? Will gardens on city-owned land lose their leases and be replaced by public housing developments or be sold off to private developers for so-called affordable housing projects?

All of these scenarios have already played out in the city, and the fear is that many more gardens will experience a similar fate.[4] Such fears have fueled efforts to strengthen the legal protections for community gardens to save them from destruction. This has included City Council changing the municipal tax code designation for community gardens and the petitioning of City Hall by the New York City Community Garden Coalition, Earthjustice, and fifty-two other organizations to have city agencies designate community gardens as critical environmental areas.[5] Both of these actions were intended to make it more difficult for city agencies to sell off existing gardens to developers.

Given the size and scale of Mayor Bill de Blasio's affordable housing initiative, worries about destruction and displacement loom large over not just the future of community gardening in eastern Brooklyn but also the ability of working-class residents of color to be able to live in East New York. While community food systems oriented toward social justice have long struggled against the growth machine politics and capitalocentrism of City Hall, gentrification has upped the ante and signaled that the fight for gardens in working-class communities of color can no longer be a single-issue movement: the community gardening movement must mobilize alongside other social justice movements to demand a right to the city and shift land use planning away from the interests of Wall Street and real estate and toward the working-class majority. Fortunately, this is occurring, with community-based organizations, including UCC and ENYF!, putting forth their own plans to counter de Blasio's affordable housing initiative—plans that call for deeper levels of affordability and stronger antidisplacement policies.[6] Although many of these proposals are reformist and do not fundamentally challenge capitalist land ownership or the development politics of the city, they are good in that they aim to protect people from the worst aspects of what has been called the "real estate state."[7] However, even with stronger antidisplacement measures, the speculative form of capitalist land ownership will continue to drive up the price of real estate and make housing unaffordable for working-class communities and communities of color. Rather than trying to tame the excesses of the capitalist market, the focus could shift to shrinking the market's existence by decoupling land and housing from capitalist relations.

This could be achieved through the food justice movement mobilizing on behalf of the expansion of community land trusts, limited-equity housing cooperatives, and public housing.[8] In New York City this could mean taking a page from the Dudley Street Initiative in Boston (discussed in chapter 3), whose

history is a testament to the possibility of coupling community-based planning with a community land trust to rebuild a working-class community of color by and for long-term residents. It could also mean calling upon New York City's own vibrant history fusing community garden activism and affordable housing activism in the Lower East Side as well as existing publicly supported rental and cooperative housing programs and organizations.[9] Such housing programs and organizations include the beloved Mitchell-Lama Housing Program, the Cooperative Village in the Lower East Side, the Housing Development Fund Corporation of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and the nonprofit Urban Homesteading Assistance Board—all of which could be used as models and leveraged in demands that City Hall, state and federal governments, community development financial institutions, and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac better fund permanently affordable cooperative housing and public housing projects.[10]

The movement could also mobilize to realize the proposal in a 2016 report by the Office of the New York City Comptroller to create a land bank for affordable housing in the city.[11] Rather than selling city-owned lots to private developers in exchange for creating a certain number of short-term affordable units, a strategy that shaped previous mayoral administrations, the report called for the city to keep the title to the land and work with nonprofit developers to achieve "deeper and permanent affordability."[12] Right now, such a land bank could create "53,116 units of permanently affordable housing located on 1,459 vacant, City-owned properties."[13] In a city of over eight million people that is a start, but it is nowhere near enough. In addition, the expansion of limited-equity cooperatives, housing created by nonprofits, or public housing will require a fundamental reallocation of power and money away from Wall Street, real estate, and affluent communities and toward urban working-class communities of color.

Issue 3: Ending Capitalocentrism

Besides advocating for the use of alternative land and housing models, securing East New Yorkers' right to the city will involve expanding people's view of what the economy is, how it should be organized, what it prioritizes, and whom it should benefit. One way to do this is through mainstreaming the language of the iceberg economy and the diverse economy (discussed in chapter 3). Given that New York City's economic and political elite have long used the language of economic growth to legitimate the demonization of, divestment in, and destruction of Black and Caribbean American communities, the mainstreaming of alternative economic concepts (when combined with movement mobilization) could force City Hall to support economic practices that would prioritize the quality of life of East New Yorkers rather than the class interests of Wall Street and real estate.

One way to shift the existing economic discourse and policy landscape is to change the methods that City Hall uses when calculating the positive and negative impacts of development on quality of life. Right now, most of the metrics in use by public institutions prioritize notions of economic growth that privilege capitalocentrism. For instance, a dominant metric is the gross domestic product (GDP), which is the total dollar value of all goods and services produced in a year within a given country—a metric that has its equivalents at the state and municipal levels. The problem with this concept is that it focuses only on outputs; takes into account the value of only those goods and services that are monetized within a capitalist economy; and does not consider the social, economic, and ecological negatives that are created by the production, distribution, and consumption of these goods and services—such as high rates of poverty and crime and air and water pollution. The concept also fails to include nonmonetized labor (such as volunteering and caretaking), noncommodified leisure activities, or noncommodified public goods (including parks and libraries). In short, such a measure privileges abstract economic value rather than the social and economic welfare of residents.

One measure that is being put forth as an alternative to GDP is the genuine progress indicator (GPI), which seeks to measure the welfare of the population by ascertaining the social, economic, and ecological benefits and costs created through the market and nonmarket provision of goods and services to residents.[14] This more holistic measure generally contains twenty-six indicators across three categories (social, environmental, and economic), with some of the indicators being income inequality, underemployment, domestic labor, resource depletion, climate change, and human health.[15] In 2010 Maryland became the first state in the United States to implement the GPI, and it currently uses twelve categories and fifty indicators.[16] In 2012 and 2013 the Center for Sustainable Economy created a GPI for the city of Baltimore and found that residents' quality of life was positively impacted by nonmarket goods and services, including ecosystem services; leisure time; the unpaid labor of volunteering and caregiving; and the public amenities of parks, schools, and libraries.[17] These findings were then connected to the need to advocate for a variety of public policies and programs that would expand paid leave policies for workers, build more green infrastructure, and strengthen public transportation. Generating GPI data therefore became important in legitimating equity and ecologically oriented policies to the occupants of City Hall—policies that are generally discounted by public officials through the hegemony of the GDP-centric lens.

Rethinking what the economy is and what constitutes it is important in building the organizational capacity to push municipal, state, and federal governments to support policies and programs that strengthen and expand civic participation and social equity, public and community spaces, and noncapitalist

and nonwork relations. This nascent shift from GDP to GPI is beneficial to the goals of the food justice movement and creates opportunities for the movement to partner with community-based organizations, nonprofits, think tanks, and academics to push the GPI concept as part of a broader effort to recenter the economy on equity rather than growth and thereby shift the priorities of government toward improving the social, economic, and ecological welfare of communities of color instead of the asset portfolios of the upper class.

Issue 4: Strengthening the Right to Food, Challenging the Capitalist Work Ethic

According to those in the food justice movement, the systemic racism of white supremacy is what is preventing communities of color from affording fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate food at farmers markets. This argument has been made for years, but it appears that the broader food movement may finally be listening as it works to expand SNAP access at farmers markets (chapter 4). Yet is the push to strengthen SNAP access intended primarily to make life more bearable for those within capitalism, or is it envisioned as a building block in the push to a postcapitalist society? In the arguments for SNAP, is wage labor centered and food assistance programs the remainder or are food assistance programs centered and wage labor absent? Only in the latter case do we find the roots of a transformative demand asserting that people's basic needs must be met outside and irrespective of wage labor.

The antihunger movement has long emphasized that hunger, food insecurity, and lack of access to fresh and affordable produce is a fact of life in the wealthiest country in the world due to the vast number of low-wage jobs, a limited social safety net, for-profit food industries, and food and agricultural agencies that have been captured by Big Ag and Big Food.[18] Such critiques are important, but they tend to align with a reformist politics that aims to reduce hunger and poverty by advocating for the growth of the capitalist welfare state and demand-side labor market policies. In short, they advocate for improving the work-income relationship, not its abolition. And in doing so they often fail to critique the cultural politics of the Protestant work ethic that legitimates the poverty, inequality, and exploitation of capitalism by asserting that people need to work for everything they have and that nothing is free.[19] This capitalist work ethic is so powerful in the United States that working-class people who are presumed to skirt this coupling of work and income, as well as public programs that are claimed to facilitate this skirting, are stigmatized and vilified as destructive to the nation and its prosperity because such income is not seen as "deserved spending."[20] When we add to this the racialization of the work ethic as a white-only attribute and the long-term opposition of white America to a welfare state that would benefit people of color, it is clear that the white supremacist origins of the capitalist work

ethic have been a central barrier to improving the quality of life for communities of color.[21]

Given this history, the food justice movement could make its support of food assistance programs more transformative by critiquing the capitalist work ethic that legitimates consumption only if it is a reward for hard work.[22] Such a goal might seem outlandish for some, including Representative Thomas Massie (R-KY), who tweeted, "How long until someone runs on the platform of #FoodStampsForAll? If healthcare is a right, is food as well?"[23] But food stamps for all is actually a key demand in challenging the capitalist work ethic's claim that income and work must be coupled. In making this demand, the task of food justice activism is to move the critique of the capitalist work ethic from the margins to the center of public debate. It could do so by demanding food stamps for all as a component of a larger refusal of the imposition of work within capitalism.

Within such a transformative politics, a question arises about how the food justice movement could articulate the fight for the right to food assistance programs as a beginning demand in what Kathi Weeks calls "postwork imaginaries."[24] How could the food justice movement scale up the demand for food stamps for all to a demand for a universal basic income (UBI)? In other words, how could the movement play a role in creating a program under which every resident obtains a monthly stipend from the government that enables them to live above the poverty line and is completely disconnected from any work, income, or asset requirement? Such a UBI would allow people to house, feed, and clothe themselves; resist low-road jobs; earn an income for the housework and care work they already do; and be able to volunteer and engage in political activism because they do not have to work as wage labor 24/7 to survive.[25] In all these ways, a UBI points to a world beyond the capitalist imposition of work, a world that expands the realm of nonwork and secures people's needs regardless of their existence and value as wage labor.

Social justice movements have long served as a means of nourishing the public's desire for a better future and connecting this desire to specific demands, policies, and programs to realize such a future. The demands for food stamps for all and a UBI echo this history, as they can be seen as invitations to dream of other worlds that are currently possible but are being blocked by the cultural politics of the capitalist work ethic. In the words of André Gorz, these demands could be a way beyond reformist reforms that shore up capitalism and toward nonreformist reforms that "advance toward a radical transformation of society."[26]

Issue 5: Constraining Philanthropy, Building the Affirmative State

To build effective community food systems oriented toward social justice, food justice organizations need much more funding in the form of general operational

support and multiyear support (chapter 5). This need is not new, and it has been communicated widely for years by community-based organizations and their advocates.[27] The lack of progress in getting foundations to shift their funding practices despite the constant publicizing of such needs underscores the fact that these calls are either going unheard or (more likely) being ignored. Furthermore, even if these changes were adopted by foundations, these institutions are still a manifestation of a plutocratic society and exist because of the tremendous racial, ethnic, and class inequities structuring the United States. This reality means that the transformative food justice movement will need to move beyond trying to reform philanthropy. It could do so by mobilizing on behalf of an affirmative state, one that could democratize the political and economic structure of the United States (as articulated in chapters 4 and 5).

Achieving this feat will not be possible if food politics remains siloed as solely a food issue or a sustainability issue, because the success of the food justice movement depends on its ability to cultivate and strengthen a coalition of movements that can serve as a radical flank and push public debate and political demands toward social transformation. The food justice movement has already demonstrated that it can be the radical flank of the food movement, as it has begun to shift movement language from food deserts to food apartheid and movement politics from distributive equity to procedural equity. Expanding on these actions is imperative and could include the reframing of democracy, freedom, and taxes (as outlined in chapter 4), for such a reframing is integral to strengthening the public's desire for and willingness to mobilize on behalf of an affirmative state that would prioritize participatory democracy, social equity, and racial justice.

Another way for the food justice movement to operate as a radical flank is transforming how the food movement conceives of its engagement in electoral politics. While in the past decade the food movement has invested time and resources in educating voters about certain candidates, it has yet to try to change the structure of electoral politics, a change that is necessary given that the electoral system is organized to maintain white supremacy and racial capitalism.[28] Many of these changes are outlined by Erik Olin Wright and Joel Rogers.[29] They include replacing privately funded campaigns with publicly funded ones, party-exclusive voting with fusion voting, single-choice voting with ranked-choice voting, winner-take-all elections with proportional representation, and gerrymandering with independent redistricting. All of these proposals would allow working-class communities, communities of color, and left-populist ideas to have more power within electoral politics. I would go one step further and advocate for the abolition both of the Electoral College in favor of a direct popular vote based on ranked-choice voting and of the Senate and its replacement with a larger House of Representatives whose members are elected through proportional representation. Now both the Electoral College and the

Senate give small rural white states outsized voting power compared to larger urban states that are more racially diverse—a process that magnifies the power of white conservatives and their anti-equity politics over tax and spending policies, which inhibits the movement toward an affirmative state.[30] Mainstreaming these electoral proposals within the food movement and associated social justice movements could become a charge of the food justice movement, as it mobilizes to shift food politics from secession to confrontation and from sustainability to just sustainabilities.

Issue 6: High-Road Jobs, the Shorter Hours Movement, and Labor Politics

Walmart has set its sights on urban communities to facilitate its next round of growth. To legitimate such plans, it has claimed that it can bring jobs, sales tax revenue, and fresh affordable produce to communities in need of all three. Yet low-road jobs will not counter the poverty of East New Yorkers, nor will it enable them to afford good food. What is needed, and what the food justice movement is working hard to do, is to shift solutions away from supply-side policies and toward demand-side ones. This reformist push entails raising the minimum wage, creating high-road jobs, and emphasizing the necessity for worker rights within capitalism, as documented by the Good Food, Good Jobs coalition (discussed in chapter 6).

One area where this reformist politics could be directed is contesting the proliferation of publicly subsidized grocery gap initiatives that lack any high-road job requirements. Without such requirements, grocery gap initiatives will have a hard time reducing food inequities because they tend to prioritize the profits of corporations over the social and economic welfare of rank-and-file workers. Grocery gap initiatives affect only a small number of workers, but they also represent a key site of mobilization that could be scaled up to other initiatives. This occurred in the Big Apple when Walmart-Free NYC released a report showing how through specific regulatory and economic policies City Hall could create thousands of high-road retail jobs as part of de Blasio's affordable housing upzoning initiative.[31]

Another area on which to center mobilization is Walmart, as it is the major actor shaping the low-road employment structures of workers in the retail and service industries.[32] Through strengthening and expanding existing collaborations with immigrant rights and labor rights movements, the food justice movement could focus its energy on turning Walmart into a high-road employer.[33] This goal appears to be more feasible than somehow reducing the power of Walmart over retailing. In addition, it is a goal that has historical precedents in the meatpacking and automotive industries, where worker mobilization turned low- road jobs into high-road ones.[34] Just because a job is a low-road job now does not mean that it will be a low-road job forever.

The Fight for $15 also reflects the burgeoning food justice movement. While there is a long way to go to make fast-food jobs high-road jobs in the United States, the lives of McDonald's workers in Denmark demonstrate that achieving this dream is not an impossibility.[35] Denmark has chosen a high-road model for its workforce through strong unions, durable collective bargaining arrangements, a culture of cooperation between unions and companies, greater government regulation, and a robust welfare state that has broad public support. As a result, the base wage for fast-food workers is $20 an hour, almost two and half times that of such workers in the United States. This wage is supported with five weeks of paid vacation, paid parental leave, a pension, and other benefits that the workers' peers in the United States do not receive. Thus, fast-food employment does not confine a person to a life of absolute poverty in Denmark, or elsewhere in Western Europe either.[36] With enough political mobilization, this could be the case in the United States, too.

This reformist food politics, which puts labor rights and demand-side policies at the center of organizing efforts, is necessary to improve the quality of life for millions of people. It could also be moved in a more transformative direction through reviving the shorter hours movement and its goal of freeing people from a life of endless work. Such a movement would be geared toward keeping labor markets tight to generate leverage for workers to both improve their working conditions and reduce their working hours. This dream of a life beyond work animated the labor movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s, generated the slogan "Eight hours for Work, Eight Hours for Sleep, Eight Hours for What We Will," and ushered into existence the forty-hour work week and the two-day weekend for many working-class households.[37] The struggle for the eight-hour day and the five-day workweek was supposed to be an ongoing fight, but its momentum was squashed in the Great Depression by the capitalist class, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Democrats and Republicans, and the leaders of several national unions.[38] As a result, the labor movement today is no longer animated by the goal of a life beyond work, and the most powerful labor unions focus their efforts on promoting the dignity of hard work, seeking work-life balance, and keeping the gains they have already won.

The threat of capitalist-imposed automation of jobs has only intensified these rearguard actions, even though with automation the refrain of the labor movement and postwork imaginaries could be "4 hours for work, 8 hours for sleep, 12 hours for what we will."[39] In fact, Andy Stern, president emeritus of the Service Employees International Union, rejects the call for reviving the shorter hours movement in favor of pursuing a UBI.[40] Rather than rejecting one in favor of the other, I see shorter hours and a UBI as interconnected sites for mobilization that can pressure capitalism to distribute the wealth that workers produce to everyone through paid leisure for all—a process that would reduce the power of capitalism and wage-labor over

people's lives by providing everyone with an income adequate to feed, clothe, and house themselves.

Food and Justice for All

The six issues discussed above are not the only ones shaping the urban food justice movement today, and new issues will emerge over time. However, these six are the problems I experienced in my years with ENYF!, the problems that ENYF! staff members spoke about in their efforts to realize food justice, and the problems articulated by others in the food justice movement. Therefore, even though the food justice movement is bigger than East New York, the stories emerging from ENYF! speak to some of the general conditions shaping the movement and the question of whether it may ground itself in neoliberalism, reformism, or radicalism. And while the dominant logics, practices, and institutions of society may try to push the food justice movement toward neoliberalism, this book has drawn upon the voices and experiences of East New Yorkers to strengthen its reformist trajectory and clarify its transformative potential by emphasizing how the movement in East New York is contesting: the neoliberalization of food access politics, the gentrification politics of the neoliberal city, the austerity politics of the neoliberal state, the plutocracy of philanthropic foundations, and the continued restructuring of the U.S. economy around low-road jobs.

Building on these experiences through my own knowledge of social movements, labor politics, and leftist politics, I sketched out several ways that the food justice movement could reframe how people see the roots of and solutions to food inequities, reconfigure the development politics of cities, realize an affirmative state, and revitalize prolabor politics and postwork imaginaries. These are lofty aspirations, but I see a lot of potential within the food justice movement, and rather than limit its radical imagination the goal of this conclusion has been to explore where the movement could go and how it might get there. Overall, what I hope emerges from the stories of East New York in this book is that the quest to create a just food system needs to be firmly rooted in the broader struggle for just sustainabilities and the important work of empowering communities of color to directly address the inequities shaping residents' lives. A food movement that puts procedural, substantive, and distributive justice at the core of its politics; places working-class communities of color and racial justice politics at the center of food activism; and forms alliances with broader social justice movements epitomizes this possibility and can go a long way toward building a more just food system and with it a more just world.

Methodological Appendix

The Research Process

This book has been over a decade in the making. Its first appearance was as my dissertation and it has reached this final form through numerous drafts and rewrites that were shaped by two assistant professor positions, the passing of three of my grandparents, the joy of becoming a father, and a move from New York to California. It is also intentionally and unintentionally a product of slow scholarship, as I gave myself quite a lot of time (some would say too much time) to think, write, reflect, critique, analyze, and edit the work individually and in collaboration with others.[1] Although the ethnographic research did not begin until 2011, the roots of the project can be traced back to 2005, when I moved to Brooklyn for graduate school and ended up living in Bushwick—a predominantly working-class Black, Latinx, and Caribbean American community. There I encountered food apartheid for the first time as a resident, with the foodscape consisting predominantly of fast-food restaurants, bodegas, and discount grocery stores. I had grown up in affluent white Marin County, California, and spent time at Sonoma and San Diego State Universities (where I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees, respectively). In all of these environments, I lived in close proximity to high-quality grocery stores or farmers markets.

This juxtaposition of food environments spurred my interest in food inequities. It was around the same time that I happened upon a copy of Vandana Shiva's *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*.[2] In the book, Shiva articulates a theory about how people are building a just and sustainable economy, food system, and world. The book was my initial exposure to the concept of food sovereignty and the fusion of environmental sustainability and social

justice. My encounters with a new food environment and a new book pushed me to choose environmental sociology as my area of specialization. I audited environmental sociology and environmental justice courses taught by Kenneth A. Gould, where I was introduced to the theory and practice of the environmental justice and food justice movements.

Gould soon became my mentor and dissertation chair. With his guidance, I decided to study the tactics and strategies that the food justice movement was using to build power and the various barriers the movement was facing in achieving a more just and sustainable society. I reached out to people at several food justice organizations in Brooklyn, met with them, and discussed how I wanted to document their respective efforts to build a just and sustainable food system and would like to work with them to produce content and material that was beneficial to the organization and broader community. I eventually partnered with ENYF! for several reasons. First, ENYF! was the longest operating food justice organization in Brooklyn and had grown from one staff member to over six and from partnering with a handful of gardeners to working with over forty. The organization's ability to exist for over a decade and scale up its work was appealing to me as a model for how food justice work could be done successfully and possibly replicated elsewhere. Second, ENYF! appeared to be an organization that was rooted in the community, as its history included procedural justice and asset-based planning, both of which are key aspects of the food justice movement. Third, ENYF!'s position within a long-standing community center oriented toward social justice appeared to shape its mission, politics, and community relations in ways that were substantively different from those of more recently established food justice organizations in Brooklyn that were either run by nonlocals or lacked long-standing community connections. Fourth, ENYF!'s model—which blended community gardens run by older residents with urban farms run through a youth program—was different than that of other food justice organizations in Brooklyn, which often focused merely on youth programs. ENYF!'s multifaceted model combined with its history and politics appeared to make the organization a great case study for discussing the strengths of and barriers to working for food justice in working-class communities of color.

After several email exchanges with ENYF!, I went to a volunteer day at Hands and Heart garden in April 2011. There I met David Vigil, the youth program director, and we discussed exactly what I was interested in doing at ENYF! and what I could offer it in return for being invited into the organization and community to do research. I explained that I wanted to document the efforts of a community-based organization that used food to address social, economic, and environmental inequities, analyzing in particular the strengths and successes of the organization as well as the barriers and hurdles it faced in its work. The purpose of doing so would be to provide insights into how the

organization promotes food justice that might be beneficial to the food movement as well as members of the broader public interested in the relationship between food and social equity. I also explained that I would volunteer for and work with the organization for close to a year before I did any formal interviews with staff members and gardeners. I suggested this for three reasons.[3] First, I wanted to make clear that I was not just going to pop in, collect research, and leave, which would have been an injustice that reproduced power inequalities and exploitative relationships between academics and communities of color—a history that I needed to be cognizant of as a white cisgender male from an upper class family. Second, during this time ENYF! was growing in popularity, with other academics and journalists doing research and writing articles about the organization.[4] To try to reduce interviewee fatigue and burnout, I focused on building relations with the gardeners and staff members. Third, as a nonlocal white male, I did not know whether gardeners would be receptive to my presence and work or see me as an interloper. Thus, I focused on building rapport and relations of trust with gardeners both to demonstrate that I was there to assist their activities and to generate their good will, so that if and when the time came for me to ask to interview them, they would be more receptive to talking with me.

Following this initial meeting with Vigil, I became a regular volunteer at ENYF! from May 2011 to May 2013, with follow-up visits during the summers of 2014 and 2015 and follow-up interviews in 2015 and 2017. During 2011 and 2012, I typically spent three to five days a week, from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 or 5:00 P.M., at ENYF! or Hands and Heart. In 2011 I was principally a volunteer at Hands and Heart, while in 2012 I was a garden member with an individual plot and grew produce for myself and for sale at the share table at ENYF! farmers markets. During this time, I assisted ENYF! staff members, youth interns, and community gardeners in making raised beds; creating compost; and planting, watering, and harvesting crops. I participated in monthly meetings for both ENYF! and Hands and Heart, served as a facilitator for Hands and Heart meetings, attended ENYF!'s monthly skill-based workshops and town hall meetings, and volunteered at the farmers markets. I also assisted David in doing archival research for the organization on the history of land use and building ownership in the community and worked as a gardener in a participatory action research project with ENYF! and the Cornell Cooperative Extension on how cover crops in urban community gardens could enrich the soil and suppress unwanted plants.

While in these settings, I made field notes and conducted interviews with gardeners and ENYF! staff members, informing them that I was a graduate student and college instructor who was volunteering with ENYF!, interested in community gardening, and writing about food justice. I also approached my ethnographic work with cultural humility and the belief that gardeners and staff members were experts in their own experiences and that my task was to

listen to, learn from, and document their experiences while providing any insights I could from my sociological knowledge of urban agriculture, food justice, and social movements. Besides my ethnographic encounters in East New York, I collected secondary material on the neighborhood from the U.S. Census Bureau, city agencies, local media organizations, nonprofit agencies, ENYF!, and UCC, and I kept up with the latest scholarly articles and books on food justice and urban agriculture.

My desire to document and analyze the efforts of ENYF! to build a more just food system in East New York was driven by several general questions: How are marginalized communities organizing to address social, ecological, and economic inequities in the food system? How do racial, ethnic, and class positionalities shape food justice projects? What barriers exist to building community food systems that aim to address racial injustice? To explore these questions, I gathered notes in the field for several months and then reviewed them to identify emerging themes and patterns as well as questions and puzzles that I took back to the scholarly literature and eventually into my interviews with staff members. This data collection and analysis process guided the rest of my research project, as I continually analyzed my qualitative data by reviewing field notes and interviews to identify emerging themes and questions and then returned to East New York to draw connections between empirical observations, interview content, and social theory. Consequently, the narratives in this book on community gardening, farmers markets, philanthropy, and Walmart all emerged from ethnographic encounters that sent me back to the literature to figure out how these events were connected to the broader history of urban agriculture, food justice activism, urban development, and social movements.

The outcome of this research process is this book, which has sought to connect my experiences with ENYF!, the organization's food justice activism, and the thoughts and actions of gardeners and staff members to the broader literature on the food movement. I hope that the book provides some value to people working in the food justice movement, those trying to better understand the movement, and those who are committed to creating a more just and sustainable food system and society. Of course, both life and the book are full of tensions and contradictions. The research that led to this book was structured by the requirements of graduate school, the dissertation process, and my quest to obtain a tenure-track job in higher education. All three shaped the scope and duration of the project, but I hope not in an overly detrimental manner. My initial plan was to work with ENYF! for at least three full years, but I became overwhelmed trying to juggle my research in East New York with teaching six courses annually for less than $20,000. As I approached my seventh year in graduate school, this situation of overwork and underpay pushed me to end my in-depth fieldwork after two years so I could enter the job market for a

tenure-track assistant professor position. I sought to address this shortened fieldwork experience through follow-up visits and interviews, all of which were intended to explore how things had gone at ENYF! after I left in 2013. My active relationship with ENYF! ended in 2017, as many of the staff members I had worked with moved on to new pursuits. Despite this, I have continued to follow the organization and community happenings through the ENYF! and UCC email lists, news reports about the community, and the websites of community-based organizations in East New York, all of which have provided information incorporated into this book.

Despite these limitations, I gained an invaluable amount of knowledge and experience from my work with ENYF!, and I hope that this book will help repay the gardeners of East New York and the staff members of ENYF! for their time. I also hope that this book reflects my desire to become a better member of, and advocate on behalf of, the food justice movement. Time will tell what effect, if any, this book has on food justice activists and scholars, as well as on the general public. If it is able to help shift the food movement ever so slightly toward placing racial justice at the core of food politics, emphasizing procedural justice as central to food-based activism, and addressing racial, ethnic, and class inequities in society, then I will consider it to have been beneficial. Whether this book has any effect on the national stage or not, I am optimistic that it can stand as a testament to the important social justice activism of ENYF! and UCC and honor their respective anniversaries: the twenty-fifth for ENYF! (1998–2023) and the seventieth for UCC (1954–2024).

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I am also indebted to my mentors and advisors in graduate school—most notably Ken Gould and Michael Menser, but also Hester Eisenstein, Carolina Bank-Muñoz, and Janet Poppendieck. Each of these people has left an undeniable mark on my theoretical influences and conceptual outlook on social relations, ecological relations, and food relations, and all of them gave me important substantive advice on how to turn a rough dissertation into a book. Gould introduced me to the fields of environmental sociology, environmental justice, and food justice; steered me through my dissertation process; introduced me to the American Sociological Association's Section on Environmental Sociology; provided me with numerous opportunities to publish my work; and has always supported my ideas and writing as important and relevant to the world. His insights are sprinkled throughout the book. Menser has pushed me to reconceptualize transformative politics through introducing me to social movements engaged with food sovereignty, participatory budgeting, participatory democracy, economic democracy, and bioregionalism. His influence is most obvious in chapter 3. The impact of Poppendieck's work on food and hunger can be found throughout chapter 4, while Bank-Muñoz's impact can be seen most clearly in chapter 6, and Eisenstein's insights into feminism and political economy are distributed throughout the book.

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Earlier portions of some chapters were published as Justin Sean Myers and Christine C. Caruso, "Towards a Public Food Infrastructure: Closing the Food Gap through State-Run Grocery Stores," *Geoforum* 72 (2016): 30–33; Justin Sean Myers and Joshua Sbicca, "Bridging Good Food and Good Jobs," *Geoforum* 61 (2015): 17–26; Joshua Sbicca and Justin Sean Myers, "Food Justice Racial Projects: Fighting Racial Neoliberalism from the Bay to the Big Apple," *Environmental Sociology* 3, no. 1 (2017): 30–41.

Notes

Chapter 1 Introduction

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Chapter 2 The Social Roots of Food Inequities in East New York

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Chapter 3 Community Gardens

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not use the term "food desert" when discussing food inequities in East New York for different reasons. First, residents do not use the term to describe their food environment. Second, it does not adequately describe the food environment of the community, since residents do have access to grocery stores as well as fresh produce via community gardens, ENYF!, and greengrocers. Third, it is based in a deficit-oriented mind-set that fetishizes and naturalizes space and ignores the social, political, and economic relations that create food inequities in East New York. Fourth, it makes invisible the existing activism of residents to contest these inequities. This summary is based on author's conversations with ENYF! staff members Sarita Daftary-Steel, Deborah Grieg, and David Vigil.

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Chapter 7 Conclusion

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